

WINTER 2018

# TIMBER MANIACS

## FINAL FANTASY FORUMS

MOGAZINE ISSUE #2

### 'Wark' with Dinosaurs

Stomp with us and discover how Final Fantasy revives these prehistoric monsters

### MYTHOLOGY MANUAL: SHIVA

Defrost the origins of the franchise's winter wonder

### KUPOCON

Why this event continues to be the ultimate Final Fantasy fan experience

### Interview with Red XIII

Thaw out with our fireside chat with the popular cosplayer

### THE PALAMECIAN EMPIRE:

Learn from Emperor Mateus' accomplishments and mistakes



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Cover art: 'FFXIV's Owlet Minion' by Galadin.



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It has been a long, ambitious journey this year, one that has left an unforgettable mark on each of us. Timber Maniacs magazine started as a fun, personal project from Dionysos and Mitsuki (among others) earlier this year, but our vision eventually evolved into so much more. It was only natural and quite essential to expand the team. Final Fantasy kept us together for many years and will undoubtedly continue to surprise us in the future. As we close this year and look forward to 2019, we can only imagine what this project has in store for us. We have learned, discovered, and awakened something new and meaningful in each of us. For that, we thank you all for your support and contribution. We couldn't have done it without you.

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# MYTHOLOGY MANUAL

## Shiva: The Transcendent Snow Sorceress.

\*Edited and updated from an online article originally posted January 18th, 2016 by **Dionysos**.

Only a handful of summoned creatures are as ubiquitous within the Final Fantasy universe as Shiva. Since her first appearance in *Final Fantasy III* this mysterious female ice spirit has crystallised into a popular fan favourite and is a regular member of the FF pantheon (appearing in 12 of the 15 main numbered games released so far, and with numerous spin-off and sequel appearances).

Shiva usually takes the appearance of a young woman with light-blue skin. Her hair is often green although sometimes it is blonde, blue, or white. As an ice spirit, Shiva is immune to the effects of the cold and for the majority of the time wears only a limited amount of clothing, with sometimes only enough clothing to censor her body for the players. This frosty 'femme fatale' often wears lavish jewels and precious stones in her headwear, necklaces, and bracelets, and she moves gracefully with a self-assured regal importance.

Shiva's signature attack, Diamond Dust, is named for the meteorological phenomenon of ground-level clouds of tiny ice crystals (alternatively known as clear-sky precipitation), placing her firmly as an ice elemental being. The battle animations of Shiva usually depict her hurling particles of ice at enemies, conjuring a frosty wind to freeze foes, or effortlessly snapping her fingers to control these elements.

Shiva is, however, a rather unusual character in that her namesake (a Hindu god) and her wintry attributes and

physical appearances are visibly mismatched. This article seeks to shed light on the confused identity of the Shiva character, and to be able to recognise and calibrate the various aspects of her design.

### The Shiva Triads: Final Fantasy and Hinduism

Shiva's debut in *FFIII* was uncharacteristic in that Shiva had three separate forms which wore unique palette swaps attached to different abilities (this tripartite nature was a feature of all *FFIII* summons, not Shiva exclusively). It is Shiva's 'High Summoning' ice elemental spell, Diamond Dust, which became her signature ability, and the colour scheme of this form also became the classic look for the character with blue skin and purple clothing. All three of these forms of Shiva share the same fairy-like appearance.

The summonable entity in Final Fantasy which we call Shiva is generally taken to have been named after the Hindu god *Shiva* / *Śiva* (meaning 'the auspicious one'). The Shiva from the Hindu pantheon is one of the Trimurti (a Hindu Triad of three principle deities which represent the cycle of creation, maintenance, and destruction). In the most basic and generalised description of this Triad, Shiva represents doom and destruction, Brahma represents creation, and Vishnu represents preservation and forces of maintenance.

*Three forms of Shiva: White Summoning, Black Summoning, and High Summoning*



## Frostbitten: Shiva and Gender Identity

The major discrepancy with Shiva's gender can be rather puzzling for Final Fantasy players, either when first encountering the female FF character or first encountering the Hindu god *after* knowing the FF character. There is a mythological precedent for this gender switch in a belief that the Shiva of Hindu faith can merge with his consort (Parvati) to become an androgynous being which is sometimes given the name Ardhanarishvara (see, for example, *Mahabharata* Book XIII, *Skanda Purana*, *Shiva Purana*, among others).

Even Shiva as an entity by himself (in some of his beardless depictions) has a youthful, beautiful, and rather effeminate look about him. In some Hindu sources Shiva is best described with feminine pronouns and as a goddess (especially when playing an active role in stories about procreation and the creation of mankind), and so Shiva transcends the bounds of gender. Whether or not this was deliberately evoked by Square may be uncertain, but there are enough precedents within Hindu religion to be able to avoid dismissing FF's female Shiva as a mere gender-goof.

Undoubtedly, the Final Fantasy Shiva is clearly intended as a fully female character, with her exposed womanly figure braving the sub-zero elements which she controls. Shiva's femininity is an important part of her character in FF and due to this she is almost *never* male. The nearest cases to exceptions would be the existence in *World of Final Fantasy* of an explicitly male alternate-dimension transfiguration of Shiva, Shivalry, and in *FFXII: Revenant Wings* where a family for Shiva consists of her male lover, Shivan, and her female child, Shivar. All of these beings are used as water/ice summoning spells and their unimaginatively suffixed names may further distance the FF Shiva character from its Hindu counterpart and source material. Alternatively, both Shivan and Shivar are in their own ways aspects of Shiva and can, perhaps unintentionally, represent the Hindu god's multiple identities and aspects.

Although it may be confusing at first, in time most players become accustomed to FF's Shiva as having her own identity which is at a first glance mostly removed from the Hindu deity. Nevertheless it is worth noting that there are many points of contact between the two characters.

### Hiding beneath the ice: Locating Hindu themes in Shiva's design

Although (mainly) male, the Hindu Shiva does actually share some aesthetic and stylistic traits with the FF Shiva. There are some similarities on a surface level in that both characters are often depicted with blue skin but for



A relief of the androgynous Ardhanarishvara from the Elephanta Caves, east of Mumbai (by Behrouz on Pinterest).

different reasons: FF's Shiva is blue, presumably, due to her purpose as an ice spirit; the Hindu Shiva saved the world by swallowing poison and this gave the god blue skin around his neck and throat (though often he is depicted as entirely blue).

The similarities do extend beyond the character's skin colouration. Some versions of Shiva (those of *FFVII*, *FFIX*, *FFXI* and *FFXIV*) have a line or jewel in the centre of her forehead, much like the 'third eye' of Shiva in Hindu mythology which in some accounts was used to burn Kama (the personification of Desire) to ashes. There appears to have been at least some conscious effort particularly from the PSX era of FF games onwards to bridge the gap and restore (or add for the first time) a Hindu heritage to Shiva.

Since *FFX*'s planet, Spira, is a world which is in part aesthetically inspired by the Indian Subcontinent, it could be expected that Square Enix would do something interesting with the design of Spira's Shiva. *FFX*'s version keeps the definitive characteristics of the FF Shiva, with the addition of dreadlocks.

This might seem like a minor change (and it may well be an unintentional connection), but among some Hindu holy men and women locks of matted hair (known as jata) are sacred, showing ascetic devotion alongside an expression of inner strength. There is also a very particular association of the Hindu Shiva with jata hair, and stories exist such as his controlling the flow of the river Ganges with his locks, and the belief that the loosening of his hair will knock the heavenly bodies off course (in his role as a destroyer / cosmic head-banger).

As demonstrated, the Hindu Shiva does in fact have connections with ice's sister element, water. The mythological Shiva is not without its associations of snow and frost either. In mythology Shiva is thought to live in or on Kailasa (Mount Kailash in the Tibetan Himalayas). Shiva is sometimes depicted either at home in the mountain or with the snowy peak of Mt. Kailash behind him, and so there is an association which can be adapted for a winter theme. It is almost as if someone in the creative team of Square had seen a beautiful image of the god Shiva (with his effeminate beauty, vibrant colour, and with the peak of Kailasa behind him), and felt inspired to design a frozen female spirit loosely possessing some of these qualities.

Nevertheless, despite it being possible to make connections between the two Shivas, and considering that we can even manage to locate the Hindu Shiva to a snowy landscape, there is no denying that Square Enix branched away from the Hindu themes more often than it followed them. FF has done its own thing in developing a winter character with designs more in common with Western mythological and fictional concepts of fairies, elves, and ice queens.

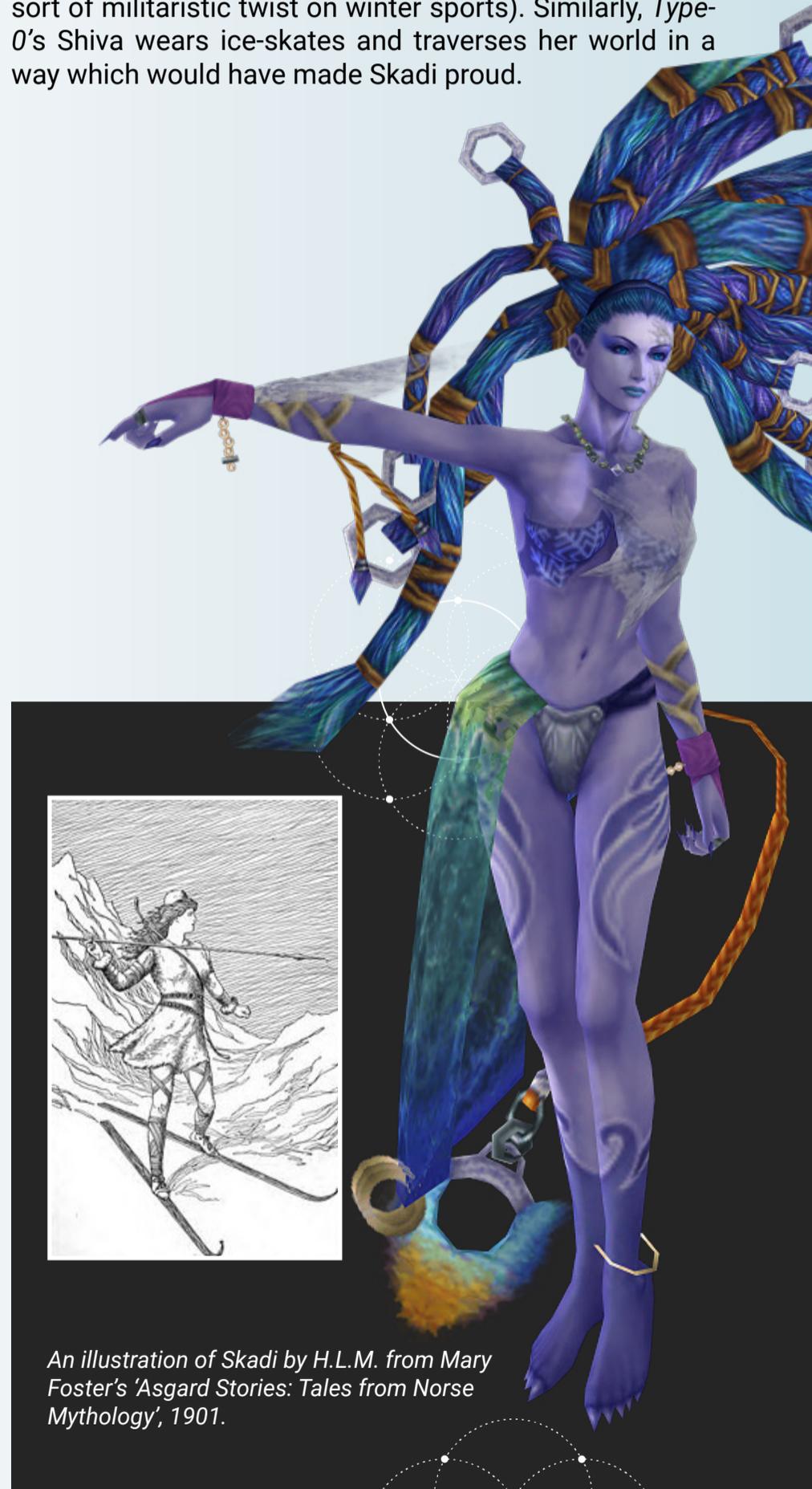
### Winter Woman: Ice goddesses and spirits from other mythological pantheons

The wintry aspects of FF's Shiva's character overshadow her rather muddled Hindu identity and other than the snowy peak of Mt. Kailash these two aspects appear to lack an obvious mutual connection. Examining other pantheons reveal that there are a number of ice goddesses and mythical and fictional females which Square Enix could instead have more easily adapted for their intended winter woman, but for some reason decided not to.

In Norse mythology there is Skadi, a giantess (or *jotunn*) and a goddess of hunting, skiing, mountains, and winter (see *Poetic Edda: Lokasenna*, and Snorri Sturluson's *Prose Edda: Gylfaginning* 51 for Skadi's most important story: the placing of the venomous snake above the bound Loki). This character could easily have been interpreted for the FF universe, skiing into battle and throwing icy spears or shooting frosted arrows at her enemies. Possibly the introduction of the Asgardian king Odin into the Final

Fantasy universe (making his debut in *FFIII* alongside Shiva) was seen to have the Norse quota covered, and so Square did not seek to slide down the slippery slope of an Asgardian avalanche by including another.

Shiva, however, would be presented as a giantess in *FFXV*, as one aspect of that universe's Shiva. When the ginormous goddess is slain by the Niflheim army, her corpse creates an environmental paradox: the former deserts outside Gralea become snowy tundra (a terrain later enjoyed by Prompto while driving a snowmobile past obstacles in a sort of militaristic twist on winter sports). Similarly, *Type-0's* Shiva wears ice-skates and traverses her world in a way which would have made Skadi proud.





In ancient Greek mythology there was a nymph or minor goddess called Chione (or Khione, from Greek *khion* / *chion*, 'snow'). There are scant references to Chione, but it is sometimes assumed that she was a personification of snow based on her name and her filial associations. Chione was the daughter of Boreas (the North Wind) and Orithyia (who herself for a time was worshipped as a minor goddess of mountain winds). Chione's siblings include Zetes and Calais (two minor heroes with wind-like superpowers who at times could fly but otherwise were as quick as the wind). Poseidon had an affair with Chione and she threw the resulting child, Eumolpus, into the sea to hide him from her father (see Pseudo-Apollodorus *Bibliotheca*: 3.199, 3.201, and also Pausanias *Description of Greece*: 1.38.2, 3.15.2, 3.15.4). All of Chione's relationships associate her with the north, winds, and even water, and so she may well have been an anthropomorphic manifestation of snow (and, indeed, she has been firmly interpreted as such in recent popular culture).

Chione did not make it, however, into Final Fantasy (with the exception of *FFXI* where Chione appears as an alternate form of Shiva which can be fought in the region of Abysea). Incidentally, in *FFXIV* a mount usable by the player and associated with Shiva is called Boreas (but

affectionately referred to as 'Shiva Pony' by fans). The description attached to the mount states that the Lady of Frost, Shiva, birthed Boreas from a unicorn offered by her followers in sacrifice. This pseudo-mythology (or an in-game mythology which the inhabitants of Eorzea supposedly believe) forces a link between Shiva and Boreas based on elemental affinities.

Curiously, neither of these characters (or any others which centred on the elements of snow and ice) were chosen for the Final Fantasy universe for any significant roles. The representative of the elemental force of ice in the FF pantheon of summons is solidly Shiva and shall likely remain so due to her established popularity. This may in part be due to Shiva being a more famous and recognisable name, but SE has never been known to shy away from obscurer deities or to make up their own entirely.

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*The steed which many players dub the 'Shiva Pony', corrupting his identity as Boreas: the North Wind.*





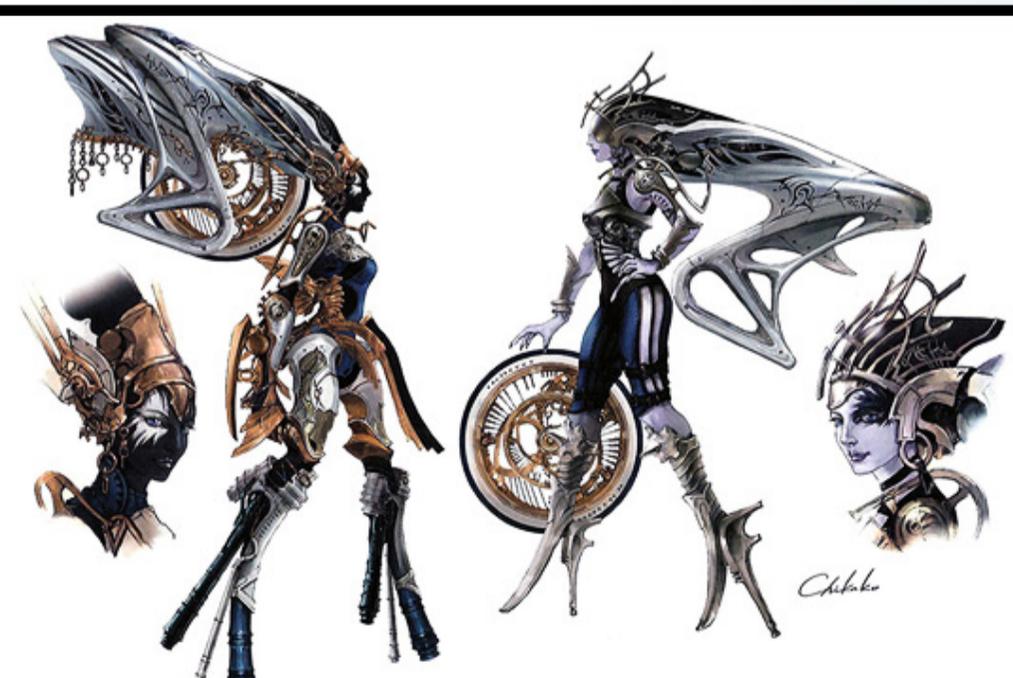
### Shiver: Secular Shiva, the Ice Queen

Despite the attachment of a Hindu name to the character, the designs for the female summonable entity appear to have been thought out independently (with exceptions such as those outlined above). For Shiva, it seems, fictional character archetypes (particularly those surrounding her element: ice) take priority over faithfully adapting a character from a particular pantheon. The vast majority of Final Fantasy's interpretations of Shiva (including all three of her original *FFIII* aspects) resemble a sprite, fairy, or elfin creature. This spirit may have more in common with William Shakespeare's Titania or J.M. Barrie's Tinkerbell

than with the Hindu deity. This is most prevalent in *FFXIV* when Ysayle / Lady Iceheart, a mortal Elezen (elf), is temporarily transformed into Shiva.

To understand the naming of the character, a popular idea circulating amongst fans is that the name Shiva instead stems from an awkward attempt at transliterating 'Shiver' in Japanese, but this theory may not hold water and instead seems like a forced (though noble) attempt at rationalising a discrepancy rather than serving as a genuine explanation. Nonetheless, it is apparent that the ice elemental aspect of the character, alongside her femininity, are more important than Hinduism to Shiva's identity.

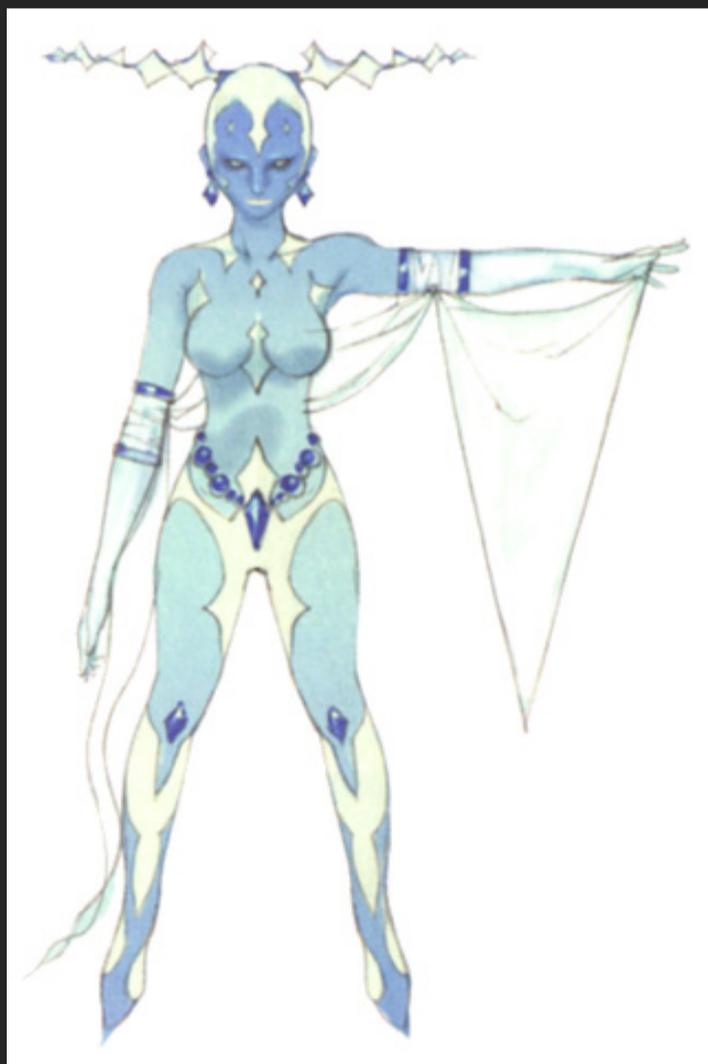
*The Shiva Sisters: When Nix and Stiria combine they become a motorcycle named Shiva. Artwork by Chikako Nakano.*



The feminine form of FF's Shiva is at her most exposed during her appearance in *FFVIII*, in which she is stripped entirely naked but for markings covering her private parts and she acts an almost seductive sequence of feminine gestures (including back-arching).

While she is uncharacteristically alien-like in this appearance (with traces of Star Wars' tentacle-haired Twi'lek, among other fictional alien humanoid species in her design), her pointy ears are still suitably elfin enough to pass as a fairy or elf-like spirit.

In *FFXIII* Shiva is split into two characters which are collectively referred to as the 'Shiva Sisters': named *Nix* (from Latin for 'snow') and *Stiria* (from Latin for 'icicle'). In case the winter theme is not apparent enough, the 'Shiva Sisters' become the personal eidolons of Snow Villiers.



Akira Oguro concept artwork of Shiva for the DS version of *Final Fantasy IV*.

Rather than naming the sisters Brahma and Vishnu (the Hindu Shiva's Triad associates), names more appropriate for their ice element were preferred and so there are no clear Hindu intentions with the characters here. Instead, the dark-skinned sister, Stiria, seems to blend an African-style headwrap and gold jewellery into the mechanics of her design. Nix, the light-skinned sister, more closely resembles the ice fairy model which Shiva usually draws from.

Nevertheless, it remains possible that the trope of splitting Shiva up into different aspects in FF might be a dressed-up attempt at representing Shiva's numerous 'avatars' in Hinduism. *FFXV*'s Shiva plays a critical role in the plot and is split into: a giantess (who is slain sometime before the game begins); a human, known as Gentiana (a form she wears in order to converse with humankind – her name relating to deep-blue flowers); her summonable form (appearing as her series-staple blue, fairy-like self, but during her attack she splits apart and multiplies herself). While convoluted (giving the player brain freeze), all of these avatars are separate, and yet also a part of one whole: Shiva the Glacian.

Shiva's identity as an Ice Queen has developed over the course of her history in FF. Although the fairy-like aspects were present from her first appearance, from *FFIX* onwards Shiva has been wearing more and more crowns and other regalia in some of her appearances. *FFXIV*'s Shiva is particularly reminiscent of the Ice Queen archetype popularised through characters such as Hans Anderson's Snow Queen and C.S. Lewis' Jadis the White Witch. It appears to be these characteristics which are adapted for the Shiva character in Final Fantasy, especially when she is fought as a boss.

### Conclusion: Building Shiva

Final Fantasy's Shiva can form an interesting case study on what is possible when different concepts that appear entirely separated from each other are mixed together as one entity. On the exterior we have an ice fairy queen taking the name of a Hindu god, but occasionally the Hindu symbolism does surface. In essence, Square constructed an entirely original character for Final Fantasy, but she was built with a combination of archetypes which act like the different tiers of a snowman which have then frozen together to sculpt a strong, formidable woman.

If you have any thoughts about the various aspects of Shiva in the Final Fantasy franchise, please contact us and let them be known!



## EMPIRES AND FINAL FANTASY

### THE PALAMECIAN EMPIRE

By Linnaete

To govern any nation, particularly something as large, diverse and volatile as a classically depicted empire, is a lot of work. It may be fun to imagine being an absolute governor of an entire sprawling empire, with concentrated wealth, authority and dignity of office vested on your iron fingertips, but to govern effectively is to have commendable mastery over the art of high politics. After all, being a ruler is essentially to discern which individuals and factions are valuable enough to keep on your side, what to offer them to ensure they aren't plunging daggers into your cold-blooded heart, and when exactly to lavish them with benefits.

*Final Fantasy*, as is staple with its genre contemporaries, has no shortage of empires and it stands to reason that if you have fantasist aspirations of being a tyrant with a crown, you should look to the series for ideal examples of inspirational autocracy.

For this issue, let us have a look at the very first empire to be featured in a *Final Fantasy* game and see what lessons it can teach us about the fine art of imperialism. We shall start with the Palamecian Empire from the generally maligned *Final Fantasy II*.

#### Who?

I don't blame you if you have not played *Final Fantasy II*. It means you were fortunate, like you've just received a call from your local dentist office to say every dentist is conveniently on strike today. Who would want to play a game where every dungeon has deceptive dead-ends that stretch for multiple floors while you're often forced to beat up your own party members in hopes of gradually raising their HP?

Let us make this clear at the outset: The Palamecian Empire is nothing like the Galactic Empire of *Star Wars* and Hironobu Sakaguchi absolutely did not watch any *Star Wars* prior to producing the game. Just because the Palamecian Empire, as the central antagonist, is a standard imperialist nation seeking to establish complete political and military hegemony while utilising the terrifying might of an enormous flying super weapon capable of annihilating entire settlements in an instant as an example to any belligerent rebels, does not mean it resembles *Star Wars* in any way, shape or form.

Nor does the existence of a second-in-command general wearing imposing dark armour and wielding a sword with a ferocity and conviction so terrifying it spooks soldiers on both sides – only to turn out to be a former ally behind that mask the entire time – mean anything!

## Leadership

The importance of leadership cannot be overstated. The ideal conquering emperor is one who commands the full loyalty of their military while appeasing other crucial factions, such as whoever is in charge of the imperial bank account and books. So long as a ruler has the full confidence of the military and the finances to fuel their expansionist agenda, their derriere can remain safely perched on the throne cushion for the time being. You need not be some brute with superhuman abilities so long as you get the job done.

That said, no one told this to Emperor Mateus, the main antagonist of *Final Fantasy II*. Firstly, the man looks like David Bowie's Jareth the Goblin King character in the film *Labyrinth*, which I would consider to be a mere coincidence were it not for the fact that the film released in 1986, two years prior to *Final Fantasy II*. Granted, any scenario where an aspiring tyrant dresses up flamboyantly to look as distinctive as David Bowie is a tremendous plus, because all of a sudden you visually stand out from any other fledgling autocrat. Put yourself in the shoes of a terrified soldier graduating from the imperial academy and think about who you'd rather pledge loyalty to: Ziggy Stardust, or someone like Emperor Palpatine, whose monstrous, mushroomed visage looks like he was attacked by an entire swarm of hornets at once.

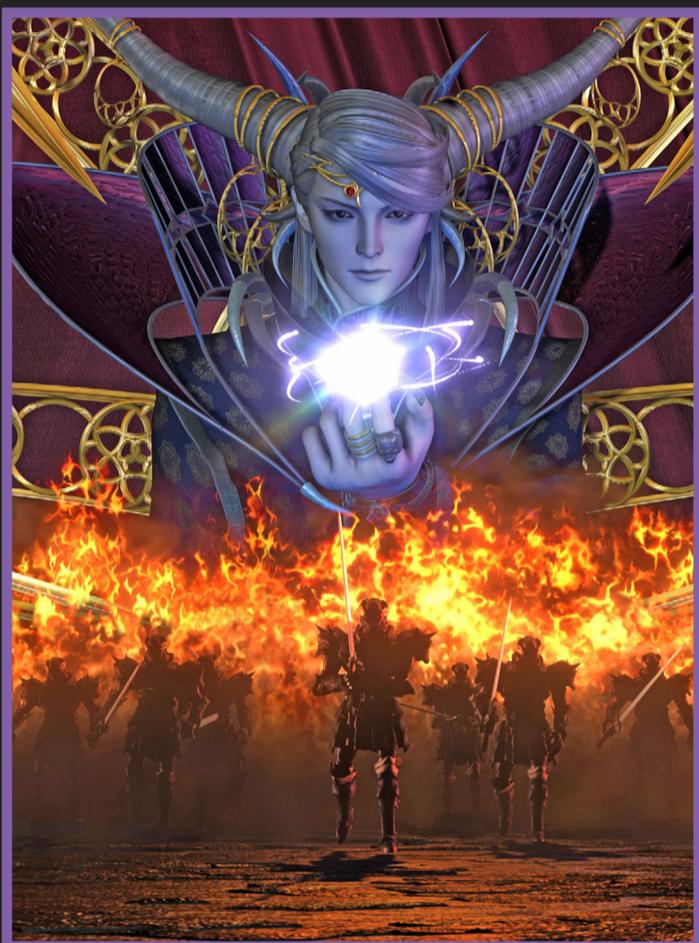
Secondly, Emperor David Bowie literally opens a portal to Hell and forces its demons to obey him. That alone puts him on a pedestal above Doom Guy from the Doom games. Doom Guy may silently enjoy battering the forces of Hell to death with either a shotgun round or with the demons' own legs, but I have never seen an incarnation of Doom where the forces of Hell almost immediately surrender to him and willingly devote themselves to servitude with next to no fuss. As far as I am concerned, *Final Fantasy II* is better than all of Doom. Maybe if Napoleon Bonaparte had forced demons from Hell to serve as his soldiers and minions, we'd all be speaking French and carving pentagrams onto our walls every day. So let this be the second lesson for any aspiring dictator: have the ability to open the gates to Hell and enslave its denizens to do your bidding.



**No resemblance whatsoever.**

An ideal leader should also watch their backs in case of a coup. Coups can happen due to any myriad of reasons. Perhaps a war you've started has now turned south and has only generated intense army mutiny, or because you've inadvertently allowed a more sanguine and charismatic leader of a rival faction to shore up their support base ready to wield that knife. Unfortunately I have no solid advice for what to do to guarantee complete tenure of office, though perhaps you can take a page from

Emperor David Bowie's book and [re-examines notes on *Final Fantasy II's* story] upon death literally conquer Hell itself, supplant the Devil and return from its depths as essentially the new Satan. If this is a feasible option for you, go right ahead. It will make a wonderful contingency plan and will only horrify your rivals and enemies alike when you return to them looking less like David Bowie and more like the ultimate biblical evil.



"...I have no solid advice for what to do to guarantee complete tenure of office, though perhaps you can take a page from Emperor David Bowie's book and upon death literally conquer Hell itself, supplant the Devil and return from its depths as essentially the new Satan."

## Geography

"But I fell asleep in geography class!" I hear some of you exclaim. Then sit down, shut up and listen, because geography is a crucial factor to consider if you're new to being an emperor.

It's no good if the beating heart of your empire sits on the middle of a flat plateau uninhibited by any features that would allow a retaliatory organised enemy to come in and lay siege to from every direction. You want solid natural defences at the very least. Britain, for example, is surrounded by water. India and China are blocked from duking it out by the Himalayas. Russia has the benefit of its sheer size and its propensity to be particularly nasty to any invading army in winter.

Palamecia's castle has the benefit of being atop a mountain range. Under the wise rule of Emperor David Bowie, all dragons and Dragoons of the world are virtually wiped out and the only civilian airship of any kind in the world is a glorified taxi service. If you have similar arrangements, there is no conceivable way that anyone can easily brave these treacherous mountainous heights to storm your heavily fortified capital, unless you're careless enough to allow a small band of angry teenagers to commandeer that same taxi airship to storm your fortress. Note also the mountainous Palamecia is bordered by the equivalent of the Sahara Desert. Though not impossible nor unheard of to be able to cross a desert, particularly if travellers have access to Chocobos or similar forms of transportation, it drastically limits the size and ability of whatever invading army is able to come knocking on your door.

“With demons, they can be sent to battle completely naked, and if they are ever hungry, can easily snack on the juicy carcasses of their fallen human brethren.”

“But Linnaete,” I hear you protest, “there is so little fertile land for agriculture. This is also not a fantasy world that will have much use for copious amounts of oil that is likely to exist under these sands. How can an empire grow to such strength in the first place with so few resources of its own, as well as food for its own people?” To which I say: what people? Palamecia is in all likelihood just mostly inhabited by literal demons from Hell by now. If I were a simple human resident of Palamecia, a random hellish imp would sooner devour me in the night before I starve from a lack of food rations.

## Military

We have already discussed that part about Emperor David Bowie having the legions of Hell under his beck and call. Aspiring emperors should definitely consider doing the same, because demons are generally more rugged and intimidating than legions of mortal meatbags. Demons are generally far less demanding and resource-intensive. Your ordinary army of humans will always require sufficient equipment, supplies and competent commanders to ensure it isn't the first day of the Battle of the Somme every time you launch a fresh offensive. With demons, they can be sent to battle completely naked, and if they are ever hungry, can easily snack on the juicy carcasses of their fallen human brethren. Just make sure you have the power to control these demons. You have to show Hell that you command all the gym badges or something to that effect...

Sometimes demons simply are not enough. There comes a time when a small band of teenagers with zero military training will somehow muster the ability to slay your indentured demons in droves. So have you ever considered building a giant super weapon capable of levelling entire settlements at once? Have you ever considered building your ultimate aerial death weapon with – in retrospect – a gaping weak spot so significant that a small feat of contrived convenience instantly destroys the whole weapon in mid-flight, instantly wiping out all life working inside the ship along with trillions of Gils' worth of investments, effort and manpower? Do you just generally enjoy expensive gambles for little to no gain? Then build a **Dreadnought**.



Here is where I think the Palamecian Empire has made its first idiotic decision, because they evidently did not learn from *Star Wars*. **Seriously, do not build a Dreadnought.** Not only are they economically unviable, they are also simply pointless. If, in contrast to *Final Fantasy XII*, you are the only hegemony in the world and there is no power able to rival your might, you are escalating an arms race with absolutely no one. At worst, you risk painting a giant, alluring moving target on something reachable and tangible. At best, your floating shell of carnage leaves every subject under your rule in permanent, binding fear and paranoia, which does no good to economic productivity. Speaking of the economy...

## Economy

If your empire is penniless, you collapse. Firstly, giant death weapons are exorbitantly expensive to build, operate, maintain and use. After all, you still need a functioning economy and healthy finances to keep everything running. You cannot rely on the forces of Hell to be very economically productive. A human being makes a fine investment banker or an engineer. A lamia can possibly rejuvenate Palamecia's red-light district (if you're into that sort of thing...). A behemoth can be a cool zoo exhibit? I suppose Palamecian zoos are not short of weird and wonderful hellish demons to exhibit, though I suspect

monsters are the majority population by now. Humans are more likely to be caged and ogled at by legions of monstrous visitors.

Secondly, casually destroying entire settlements will either only harden subjects' sentiments against you, or you've essentially just killed everyone. What is the point of ruling over wastelands when they are not going to be economically productive either? As such, I recommend you do not wantonly destroy whole civilisations. I recommend you put in the effort to identify what their economic strengths are and allow them to flourish under your supervision, so you can in turn earn generous tax revenue from their activities.



Good luck finding the manpower to build another one of those after you've destroyed the world.

## Conclusion

### DO:

- If you're going to be an emperor, it helps to be David Bowie.
- If you can open up a portal to Hell and force its demons to work for you, I highly recommend it. It can be a great help militarily, albeit less so for human civilians who just want to live their lives in peace without succubi knocking down their doors.
- Being able to kill Satan and take his place as a contingency plan can help.
- Situate your imperial capital in a suitable geographical location where your enemies cannot easily get to you.
- Treat your conquered provinces as potential lucrative sources of revenue using whatever means necessary. Keep your coffers filled.

### DON'T:

- Do not build any Death Stars or Dreadnoughts. You want to be a sound financial manager.
- Do not indiscriminately wipe out entire towns and cities. Human beings are useful for economic productivity when alive. They are far less useful when dead.
- Do not allow a band of justifiably angry teenagers who have spent many dozens of hours grinding for inflated stats, weapons and magic to unexpectedly turn up at your mountain top fortress ready to kick the door in and prematurely end your illustrious period in office.

# Bones and Bestiaries: 'Wark' with Dinosaurs

By Dionysos

Ever since humans unearthed the first fossils, extinct prehistoric animals have enraptured our imagination. Above all, dinosaurs (and other reptiles of the Mesozoic Era commonly confused with them) are frequently resurrected in our cultural consciousness; images are conjured of colossal creatures stomping through a younger, exotic Earth until doomed by an asteroid. Yet dinosaurs were hugely successful and diverse (thriving for over 160 million years) and remain with us today in the form of their direct descendants: birds. Conversely, modern humans (*Homo sapiens*) have so far been around for under half a million years. In the sands of time we are but a single meagre grain whereas dinosaurs would go a long way towards filling an hourglass.

The varied approaches to these marvellous Mesozoic monsters within the Final Fantasy multiverse should be enough for you to sink your teeth into!

## Being Petrified!

Fossils are any remains, impressions, or traces of long-deceased organisms. Mostly surviving to us in rock, these mineralised miracles offer rare snapshots of the distant past. Final Fantasy's staple status effect Petrification could liberally be interpreted as the process of fossilisation, albeit instantaneous in lieu of experiencing compression from many layers over the passage of immense time.

Curiously, some of Final Fantasy's dinosaurs are presented as we would encounter them today in museums, as petrified bones. A large number of related reanimated dragon-like skeletons are encountered in *FFIV*'s Lunar Subterrane. Whilst appearing as dragons rather than accurate representations of specific dinosaur species, some variants bear labels such as **Lunasaurus** and **Zombiesaur**, exposing Square Enix's intentions. The trope was improved with *FFV*'s **Tyrannosaur** which is a living fossil with vastly improved scientific accuracy. Through this the present state of preservation of dinosaurs is acknowledged and worked with creatively. Being undead, these enchanted remains are exhibited here as extinct creatures: relics from a land before time, not living organisms.



## Bahamut: King of the 'Dinosaurs'?



You're a dino, Harry!  
Skeletal reconstruction of *Dracorex hogwartsia* at  
The Children's Museum of Indianapolis.

Dinosaurs in Final Fantasy are explicitly related to dragons. In the bestiaries of various games, dinosaurs are often listed under suborders of the dragon family (being particularly prominent in *FFXIV's Heavensward* expansion). Sprites and character models are also often interchangeable as certain monsters - such as **Brachiosaur** - take turns being visually depicted as dragons, whereas others are dinosaurs by appearance but dragon by name.

This is hardly surprising given that humans have long connected the mythical fire-breathing reptiles with the exhumed prehistoric 'terrible lizards'. It is a popular idea that before modern scientific systems for classifying fossils, people throughout history may have unearthed dinosaur bones reinforcing or re-inspiring their beliefs in mythological dragons and monsters.

This marriage of dragons with dinosaurs sometimes even crosses into palaeontology: a (disputed) species of pachycephalosaur has been named *Dracorex hogwartsia* ('Dragon King of Hogwarts') honouring the Harry Potter franchise due to its dragon-like cranial spikes. One wonders if palaeontologists would ever name a dinosaur after Final Fantasy...



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## Ferocious Theropods

When dinosaurs are imagined as living creatures in popular culture, regularly their role is to chase the protagonists and gobble up several less-essential companion characters and villains. In Final Fantasy, dinosaurs are likewise predominantly employed as monsters rather than animals, tucked into the bestiary alongside mythical creatures and Square Enix's original wacky designs.

Foreseeably, the most common dinosaur suborder to find representation is the theropod (which includes popular species such as the *Tyrannosaurus rex* and *Velociraptor*, as well as all birds). From the very first Final Fantasy, theropods appear as random encounter monsters: mostly seen through variants of *Tyrannosaurus* or *Allosaurus* in the single-player games. This popularity is unsurprising. With the most powerful bite of any land animal in Earth's history, the famed *Tyrannosaurus rex* has earned its spot as the iconic king of dinosaurs; the *Allosaurus* is also a highly marketable ambassador for successful predators.

Amongst the powerful Tyrant genus of monsters in *FFXII*, the *Wild Saurian* earns particular attention for plausible behaviour through its predatory hunting. Enabled by enemies spawning on the overworld rather than random encounters, these tyrannosaurs eat wolves to increase their levels.



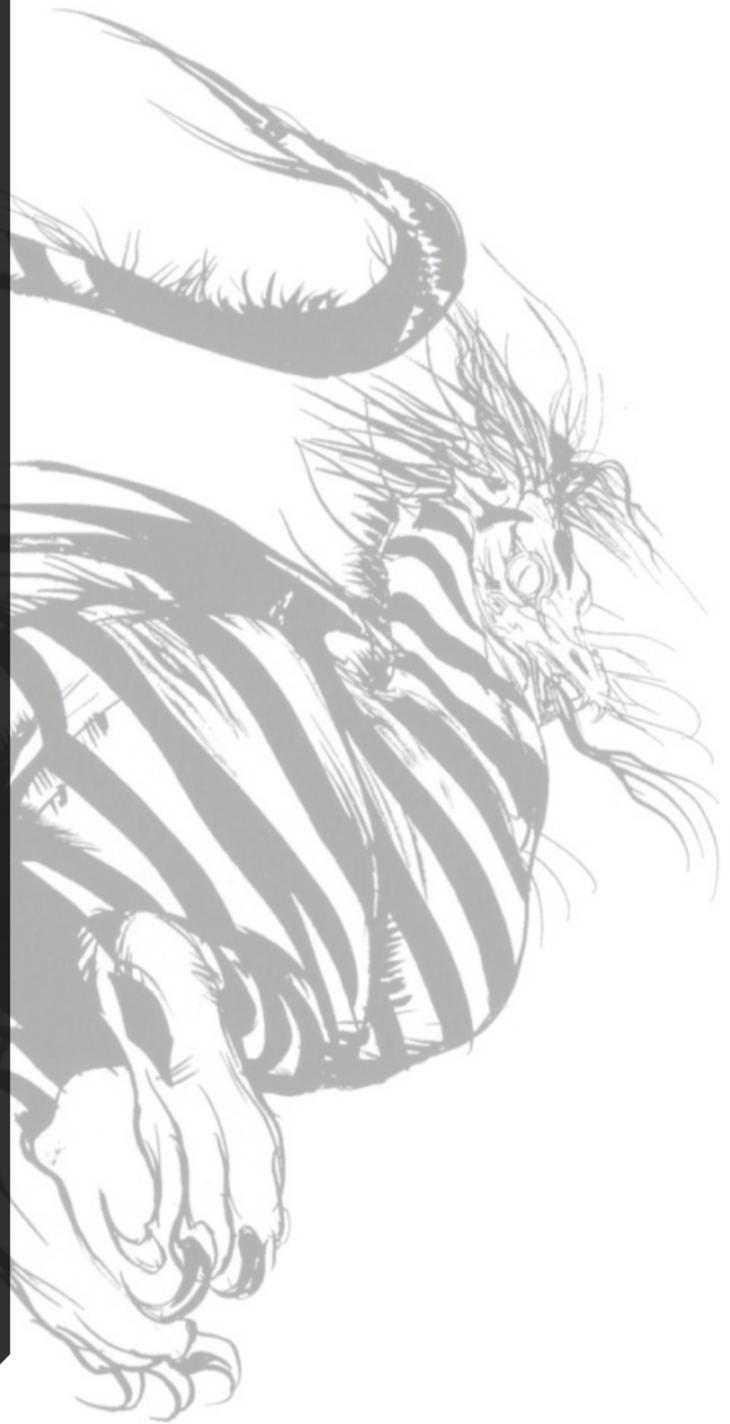
Screenshot by Lemmy

Species diversity in Final Fantasy is largely in name only, with most dinosaurs wearing palette swaps of generic theropod dinosaurs rather than uniquely rendered models displaying the individual derived features of specific species. Not appearing in the main franchise, 'raptors' are ubiquitous in the online games (sharing the same basic design). Extra effort is spent labelling these with more particular names, including famous 'raptors' such as *Velociraptor* and *Deinonychus*, but also those rarely represented such as *Coelophysis* and *Eoraptor*, alongside popular herbivorous theropods such as *Gallimimus* (inaccurately labelled as 'raptors').

It would seem that Square Enix have revised their representation of theropod posture over the years adhering to popular trends. The first theropod monsters from *FFI* were the upright, lumbering beasts from old movies; by *FFVIII*, the *T-Rexaur* was adopting a more realistic, forward-leaning posture (similar to birds), with its back parallel to the ground and its tail raised behind.

This progression is not perfect. Often the numbers of digits on the hands and feet of Final Fantasy theropods can be inaccurate, and (joining many dinosaurs in popular culture) they have pronated wrists with hands facing, uselessly, downwards instead of facing inwards for slashing and holding prey. These 'piano hands' could be useful for challenging Bartz's mastery or wooing Laguna in a hotel lounge, but little else.

Square Enix have also opted for naked (featherless) theropods, otherwise some of these dinosaurs might have looked like toothed-chocobos! Despite scientists knowing for some time about feathered dinosaurs, the idea has still not entered mainstream popular culture since it remains in flux and it is still debated just *how* feathered some species were. Despite mimicking the basic stance of a dromaeosaurid theropod, Vana'diel and Eorzea's erotically nude interpretations of 'raptors' incorrectly possess mammalian external ears and diminutive, leathery, bat-like wings where they should have (preferably feathered) arms.



An Eorzean *Eoraptor* in Brayflox's Longstop (Hard)  
by usgamer.net



Artistic restoration of *Brachiosaurus alithorax* by Nobu Tamura.

Theropods are not the only dinosaur suborder to find representation in Final Fantasy. While significantly less common, the 'dinosaur as monster' trope is extended to herbivorous sauropods, ceratopsians and ankylosaurs.

Horned ceratopsians appear in *FFXIV* (with variants of *Triceratops*), and a handful of other instances including a *Torosaurus* (*Final Fantasy Dimensions*) and a highly modified ceratopsian (*Heavy Tank*) in *FFVII*. Ankylosaurs only questionably appear in Final Fantasy, being an alternate name for the armour-backed monster *Baretta* in some translations, but lacking many ankylosaurian traits.

Typically the long-necked sauropods are named after *Brachiosaurus* (unsurprisingly given its popularity from *Jurassic Park*). Usually lacking the derived characteristics of the real animal which roamed North America in the Jurassic (such as a defined crest), these *Brachiosaurs* merely convey a generic 'sauropod'. Although *FFVI*'s *Brachiosaur*'s forelimbs are rightly longer than its hind limbs, it sprawls with its stomach close to the ground, its neck painfully looping around. An updated version of this sprite is used in *Brave Exvius*, where the neck is less awkward, the body raised, and the limbs more assuredly columnar. More accurate still is *FFXIV*'s *Brachiosaur* morphology, holding its (now crested) head in an upward posture as the shoulders are elevated above the pelvis, holding a more comfortable position for the animal.



A baby brachiosaur on *FFXIV* - by Lady Pandora Heinstein.



The **Vlakorados** is a very unusual dinosaurian creature in *FFVII* which most players notice roaming the northern continent while collecting aphrodisiacal Carob Nuts for chocobo breeding. **Vlakorados** is notable for combining separate traits belonging to different dinosaurs: shoulder spikes and tail spikes (resembling various species of stegosaur); a bipedal stance (resembling a theropod, pachycephalosaur or ornithopod); meat-eating teeth (resembling carnivorous theropods). Square Enix appears to have created their own hybrid monster selecting dinosaur parts from their toolkit, preceding the creation of *Jurassic World's* Indominus Rex and Indoraptor.

These dinosaur connections are clearer when you consider the Japanese name of the monster, *Burakioreidosu* (Brachiosaur), sharing the same name used in Japanese for the **Brachiosaur** enemy in *FFVI* as well as various dragon enemies in other games.

Other dinosaur-based hybrids in Final Fantasy have likewise led to surreal results (such as *FFXII's* fish-finned tyrannosaur-based hybrids). Here 'dinosaur' is transmitted without pretensions of respecting palaeontology. Square Enix were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn't stop to think if they should...

**"YOU JUST WENT AND MADE A NEW DINOSAUR?"**  
(Owen Grady, *Jurassic World*)



## Stomping Grounds

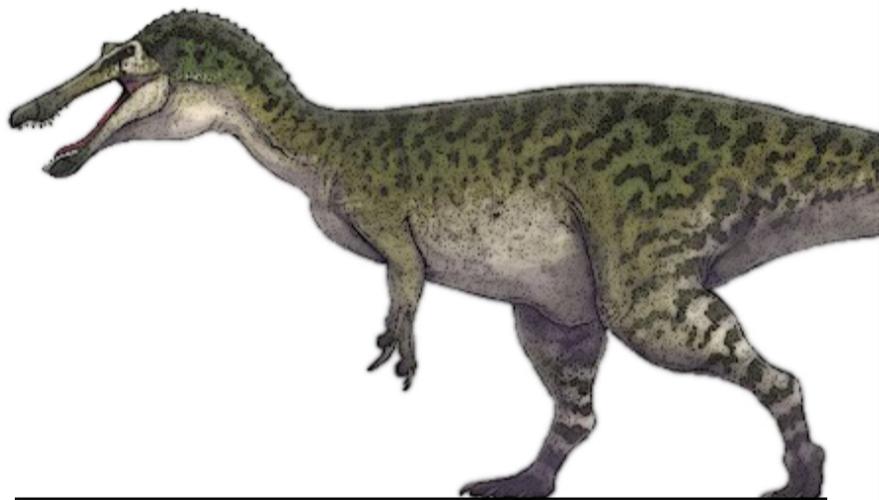
The locations in which players usually encounter dinosaurs do not appear to be entirely random, but often make sense within their fictional universes. Living dinosaurs in Final Fantasy are often encountered in forests, deserts, or other appropriate habitats fitting the spread of real dinosaurs across the globe, or 'primordial' landscapes. Fossilised 'undead' dinosaurs are more likely to be encountered appropriately underground in caves or dungeons, and those explicitly linked with dragons tend to be encountered in dragon lairs.

A favourite location north of the Veldt for grinding during the late-game stages of *FFVI* is fan-named 'Dinosaur Forest' because **Tyrannosaurs** and **Brachiosaurs** spawn here and the forest vaguely resembles a dinosaur head; they are comfortably located in their very own 'lost world' in an isolated, forested ecosystem. *FFXIV*'s Diadem as a haven for theropods, **Brachiosaurs**, and **Triceratopses** distortedly explores comparable ideas.

The 'training centre' of *FFVIII*'s Balamb Garden is a prominent location for the player to encounter **T-Rexaurs** early in that game. As training centres go, this place is rather unorthodox; its electric fences, palm trees, and girders thrown about by an apparent hurricane, lend it the appearance of Isla Nublar during 'the incident' of *Jurassic Park*! Balamb Garden spared no expense in fitting the perfect enclosure for its dinosaurs.

Infused with technology, *FFVII*'s cybernetic ceratopsian **Heavy Tank** haunts the ruined Mako reactor of Gongaga, implying its mutation may have been a result of Mako fallout. Since *Godzilla* (1954), there has been a fascination in popular culture with radioactive dinosaurs and this likely taps into that rather than palaeontology. Its location is apt.





Life restoration of Baryonyx by [Robinson Kunz](#) and [Rebecca Slater](#).

In another instance dinosaur and human cohabitation is implied to have occurred in antiquity rather than in present times. A poorly lit stone relief in *FFVII*'s Temple of the Ancients appears to depict a carnivorous theropod dinosaur. The exact identity of the individual species of the Cetra dinosaur is nebulous and seldom discussed, despite the curiosity's offbeat appearance contrasted against everything else in the temple.

While the depicted posture follows the old-school illustrations of theropods (upright with dragging tail), the shape of the head might suggest an approximate identification as *Baryonyx* (a British spinosaur theropod, Early Cretaceous). Like other spinosaurs, *Baryonyx* was mostly piscivorous, and its distinctive crocodilian-style snout and conical teeth helped it catch fish. Probably unintentional, this dinosaur's presence in a Cetran temple (a culture which elsewhere holds aquatic motifs with high regard) wonderfully suits this theme.

The primary function of the dinosaur relief might be to signify great antiquity (albeit a fictional Flintstones-esque fantasy where humans and dinosaurs coexisted). With limited time available to provide the player with expansive details, imagery such as dinosaurs immediately indicates the passing of deep time.

Secondly, the presence of dinosaur art among the ruins of ancient civilisations is a recurring trope in fiction, and also in certain Creationist communities where unorthodox theories suggest that in ancient times dinosaurs and mankind lived side-by-side (with ancient art, according to them depicting 'dinosaurs', serving as evidence). The so-called 'stegosaur' of the 12th Century Cambodian Temple of Ta Prohm is a favourite example, though the 'stegosaur' is likely merely an artistic rendition of a contemporary or mythological animal. Such theories are wishful misinterpretations, but nonetheless capture the imagination.

# Palaeontological Parks

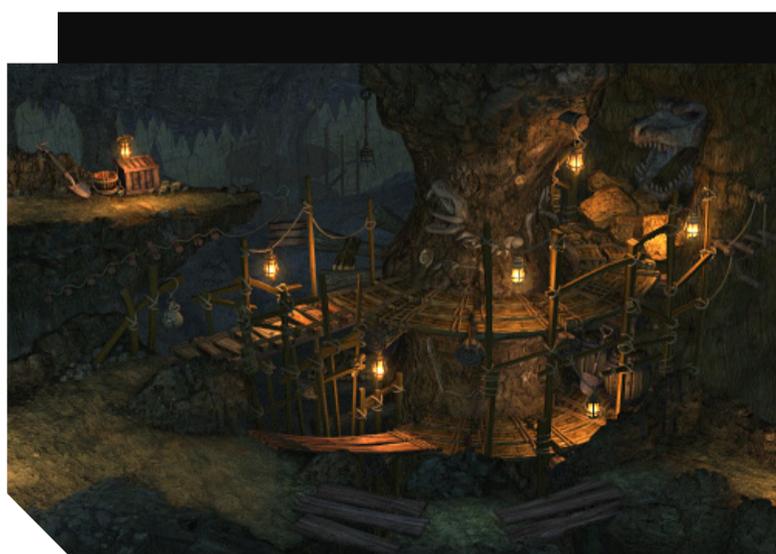
In some cases dinosaur fossils (or gargantuan, unidentified creatures) are a part of the very landscape of the world the player explores.

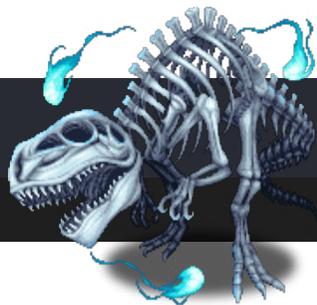
*FFVIII's* Great Salt Lake is a dried-up lake wherein enormous skeletons of vaguely dinosaurian monsters lay exposed. This is reminiscent of the ancient Lake Bonneville (of which the Great Salt Lake of Utah is a remnant) which left myriads of fossils post-recession. *World of Final Fantasy's* Icicle Ridge, one might suspect, makes some reference to *FFVIII's* Great Salt Lake, but trading salt for ice uses the location as a frozen sea entombing grotesquely oversized dinosaur skeletons.

An active attempt to depict palaeontology in Final Fantasy is a settlement built on a bone bed in *FFVII*, appropriately named Bone Village. Rib cages of gigantic extinct creatures are used here as the supporting beams of buildings, and the skulls of dead dragons (although these skulls appear mammalian) are also worked into the fabric of the village which serves as a recreational palaeontological park, inviting visitors to excavate whatever they can.

A mini-game allows players to set charges of dynamite to clear the earth and uncover items. This is not unlike genuine palaeontological practices (in certain circumstances such methods have been utilised by experts). While hidden dialogue with an NPC emotively explains the importance of palaeontology in the *FFVII* universe, in practice it scarcely makes sense; the player can only 'excavate' treasure, not fossils. Perhaps the crashed fighter jet plane (a remarkable feature which nobody seems concerned by) serves to bridge the gap and explain how modern 'every-day use' items contaminated prehistoric layers. As gamers, we understand the actual reason is gameplay mechanics.

A similar mini-game exists at *FFIX's* Fossil Roo, which contains fossilised skeletons of dragons and dinosaur-like creatures protruding from the tunnel walls. Here also the player can excavate game-related items rather than the fossils the theming of the area would suggest.





Excepting birds, dinosaurs on Earth (alongside 75% of all life) are thought to have been wiped out when an asteroid, about 10-15 km wide, struck the Gulf of Mexico some 66 million years ago. In addition to Final Fantasy's dinosaurs sometimes being represented by bones in a variety of contexts, dinosaurs are also handled to convey in-universe awareness of the manner of their extinction.

Some references are brutally ironic, such as *FFVI*'s **Tyrannosaur** and various versions of **Brachiosaur** having the ability to cast 'Meteor'! In *FFVIII* this spell can also be extracted from a hidden draw point atop a dinosaur skeleton at Great Salt Lake. Whether intended as a joke at the poor dinosaurs' expense, or chosen due to dinosaurs and meteors thematically connecting in the public consciousness, the association appears deliberate.

Furthermore, meteors form an important part of the plot of *FFVII*. Sephiroth uses the Black Materia discovered in the Temple of the Ancients to summon Meteor to wound the Planet. This depressing doomsday scenario looms over the planet in the latter part of the game, but it would not have been the first time the Planet had been hit by a meteor. The Planet's topography contains several areas which could tentatively be interpreted as craters, and the alien entity Jenova crashed into the planet on a meteor creating the North Crater 2,000 years prior to the game.

When these cosmic collisions are considered alongside the presence of the dinosaur relief within the very temple which acts as the Black Materia in its transfigured form, the association may involve a warning of the impermanence of life on the Planet; maybe the non-avian dinosaurs also went (mostly) extinct in *FFVII*'s universe following a cataclysmic collision during the planet's prehistory. If not just another joke by the game's developers, the carefully placed relief may warn any future intruder that a careless use of the Black Materia may cause the extinction of further lifeforms, even themselves. In this sense it resembles the warnings of palaeontologists regarding our own uncertain dominance on our planet, citing dinosaurs as cautionary tales.



Screenshot by [Zeno Silverberg \(Reddit\)](#)



## Conclusion

Final Fantasy dinosaurs are sometimes depicted as: living animals; reanimated fossils; decoration for theming. On the whole they are located in areas which fit their presented states of preservation. Square Enix also touch on a variety of dinosaur tropes, and have clearly taken inspiration from popular franchises such as Jurassic Park, with many of the ancient animals selected for representation being unsurprising. Though the franchise forgivably falls for pitfalls such as depicting naked, piano-playing dinosaurs, the palaeontological accuracy has improved incrementally over the years, as have attempts to depict a wider view of species diversity.



# PARADISE LOST: MIDGAR AS A CORPORATE DYSTOPIA

By Linnaete

## Introduction

Urban planning as a profession has a storied history dating back many centuries. Though its styles and approaches have evolved and redefined itself countless times from one period to another, its core function has remained the same: to convert the abstract visions of the day about how society *ought* to be organised into a tangible urban environment that reflects and implements such ideas. To the most passionate members of the profession, the ideal model city serves as the fundamental first stage to *crafting the ideal urban society*. In essence, it is part of the pursuit for utopia.

## EPCOT

In the mid-1960s, Walt Disney sought to look beyond the confines of his entertainment empire and consider the future his children and their offspring would inherit. He saw urban life in desperate need of a revolution. The haphazard expansion of cities culminated in overly stressful environments, blighted by mounting congestion, poor cleanliness, insufficient access to natural light and resources, worsening living conditions, economic inequality and crime. It was a far cry from Disney's own carefully planned, pristinely managed and firmly controlled theme parks. Likely coloured by this very realisation, Disney set about exploring ways in which the lessons learnt from meticulously constructing and maintaining theme parks could translate to urban life and what he personally felt was the first, grandiose step in a long march to utopia.

Prior to Disney's death, he laid out in film his vision for a model utopian city, titled the *Experimental Prototype Community of Tomorrow* (EPCOT). No doubt this acronym may ring bells of familiarity, for a theme park in Disney World Florida shares this very name. However, the EPCOT of Walt Disney's imagination is far more than a theme park attraction for a myriad of paying visitors to celebrate technological innovation. His was to be a city of perpetual progress; it would serve as both a testing ground for new technological inventions designed to augment and improve urban life, and a blueprint to inspire and galvanise urban planners around the globe. EPCOT would be a radial city with concentric streets and bands of green recreational zones separating residential from industrial rings. As such its style is heavily reminiscent of Ebenezer Howard's garden city model, which was conceived at the tail end of the 19th century to be the antithesis of claustrophobic industrial cities at the time. That industry and country life could not realistically co-exist without the sacrifice of either was a reality in both Howard's and Disney's days. With a theoretical garden city design, an urban environment could unify the existence of industry and nature.

While Howard was fixated purely on conceiving a blueprint for a better city of the future, Disney's approach was first and foremost from the perspective of a corporation. EPCOT was to be a company city; its concentric design would converge on a singular towering hotel and convention centre that would serve as the ultimate looming symbol of Disney's corporate triumph. They could dictate strict terms on who was allowed to reside in their city and undoubtedly what activities and enterprises are permitted. To address the problems of crime and poverty,

all residents would be verified employees of the company, leaving no room for retirees, the homeless or the itinerant. Astonishingly, no resident would be a homeowner or landowner. Their accommodations would essentially be leased to them with Disney retaining considerable legal muscle to enact any such technological and equipment changes to each apartment when required. So if someone from company headquarters turns up with a brand new prototype fridge from a partnered manufacturer, you would be obliged to let them immediately install it while surrendering the previous model. You would merely be a licensee by Disney to have the *privilege* of being a part of *their* utopia.

Had Disney's company city been realised and proved feasible, what would this EPCOT represent? Would it necessarily mark the first major step towards achieving utopian urban life? The cynic in me is far more critical of Walt Disney's dream. The man was a talented visionary, but above all he was a businessman. EPCOT would more likely represent a radical physical manifestation of a corporate philosophy that persists to this very day. Every one of its residents would be a cog in the system, unable to own the very properties they reside in, and whose lives would be more susceptible to corporate intrusion than in any other city in the world. They are permanent consumers of a single corporation, collectively subscribing to a same futurist philosophy. The rulebook is Disney's to write and every prospective resident thoroughly scrutinised and vetted before they are offered the keys. It would be a population of the carefully curated. While income brackets would naturally remain varied, poverty could be non-existent, which is very easy to achieve when your solution to a pervasive problem is to expressly exclude it within your own walls.

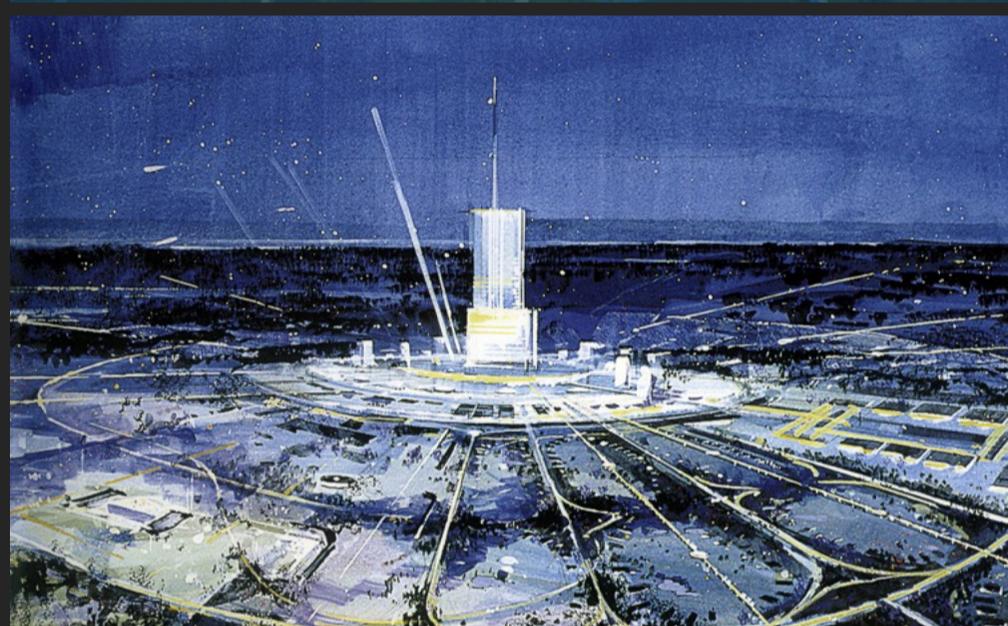
## Midgar

I wished to talk at length about the EPCOT concept because it presents fascinating loose parallels with a certain pizza-shaped city in the *Final Fantasy* series. I am talking about a certain Midgar in a little-known game called *Final Fantasy VII* (which will soon also be available on Xbox One and the Nintendo Switch!). Having identified the potential shades of dystopian values in EPCOT, I would now like to see what the fictional Midgar can inform us about a corporation's own visions for *crafting the ideal urban society*.

Midgar borrows heavily from aspects of cyberpunk and its design and set pieces are very much influenced by some of the key politics of the genre. Nature has permanently been swept aside by man's ambitions. Shinra's throne sits atop a land practically devoid of nature, as its Mako Reactors systematically purge the region of any semblance of natural fauna sans the flowers in Aerith's church. Look beyond the glamorous façade of the



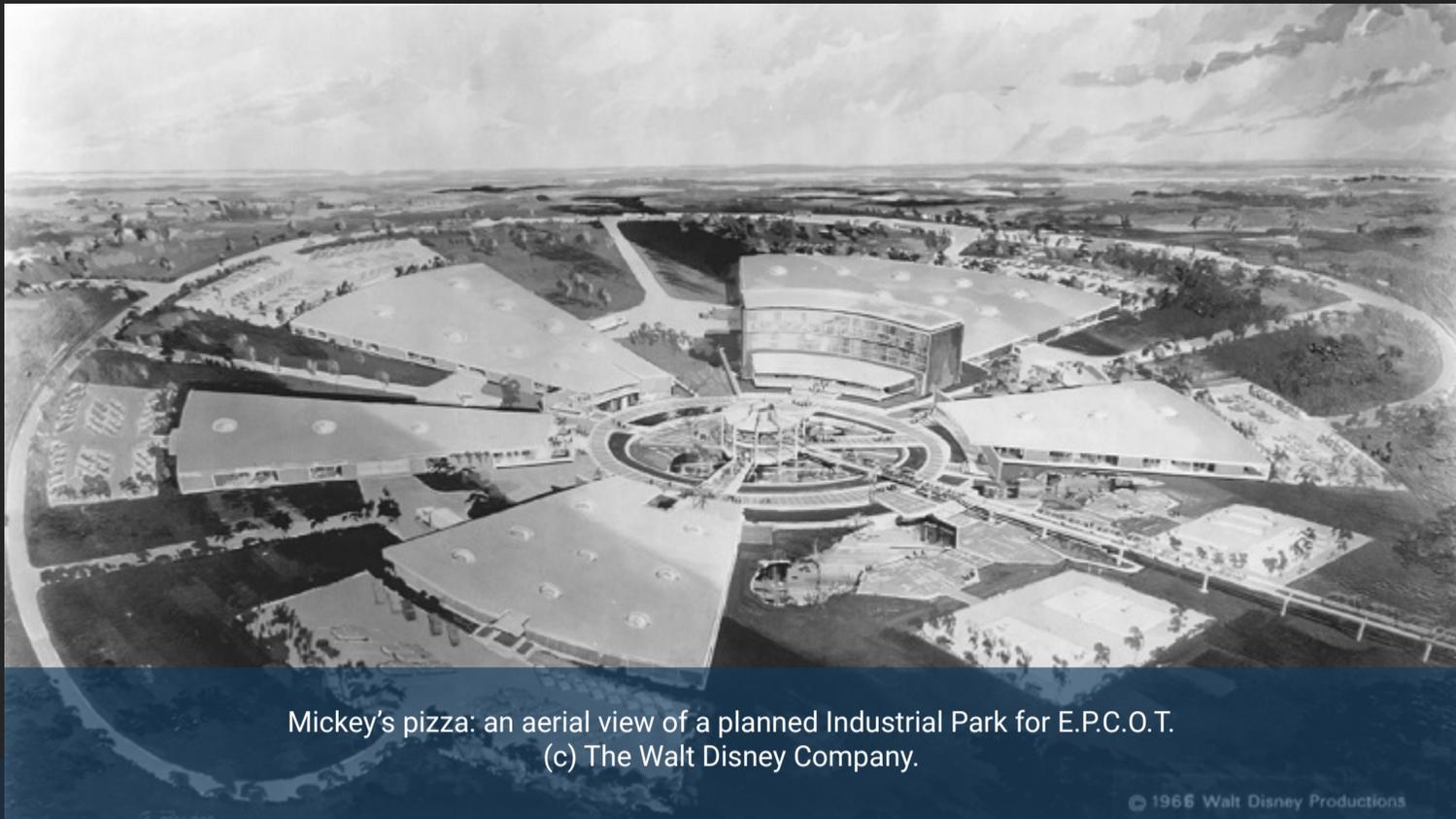
George Rester and Herbert Ryman's design: a birds-eye view of the plans for E.P.C.O.T.'s urban centre shows neatly segmented sectors surrounding a tower complex. (c) The Walt Disney Company



1966 concept art by Herbert Ryman: overview of Downtown district in E.P.C.O.T, depicting the Cosmopolitan Hotel tower and encircling greenbelt. (c) The Walt Disney Company



Entertainment above the plate: Sector 8 shows that life atop Midgar's 'pizza' is far from perfect.



Mickey's pizza: an aerial view of a planned Industrial Park for E.P.C.O.T.  
(c) The Walt Disney Company.

© 1966 Walt Disney Productions

“Midgar is a city plagued by both the atmosphere of an eternal construction site and of a post-apocalyptic Hobbesian society where material survival triumphs over that of communal upkeep.”

Sector 8 entertainment district and you notice the entire city appears to be built on some of the worst examples of engineering and maintenance I have ever seen. Its numerous reactors and industrial zones are inundated with endless serial numbers, precariously hanging girders and steel beams rotting and corroding so heavily that it is any wonder that the whole city has yet to even literally collapse. The upper pizza crust is kept up only with pillars so flimsy that a single one can be sabotaged with considerable ease by the Turks to send the Sector 7 plate crashing down. Midgar is a city plagued by both the atmosphere of an eternal construction site and of a post-apocalyptic Hobbesian society where material survival triumphs over that of communal upkeep. Ebenezer Howard would likely turn a Buster Sword on himself if he were alive and a visitor of Midgar!

Granted, there may be a plausible in-game explanation as to why Midgar's basic upkeep is so poor. The senior President Shinra seeks to build a Neo-Midgar in the fabled Promised Land where Mako energy is said to be the most abundant of all. The current Midgar is expendable, like an old, banged-up car that is well past its prime and ready to be replaced by a sleek new Tesla. I can only imagine what this Neo-Midgar would be like providing it is feasible and treated as a fresh blank slate for the company. It would be the optimal opportunity to rid society of undesirables and start from scratch without existing baggage. It is doubtful Shinra would still tolerate the existence of an unwanted underclass of residents

potentially harbouring environmental extremists. I cannot help but wonder if planning Neo-Midgar is anything like the EPCOT approach. “This is the new utopia we're about to build and run on our own terms.”

Beyond the drab, miserable visuals and the overt socio-economic stratification where the poor are banished to their own invisible cities under the pizza, how else is Midgar an exemplary corporate dystopia? Firstly let's consider the absolute reliance on Mako energy. This is the main product in the equation – what Shinra is *selling* to its people, or rather, its *consumers* in the upper plates. Practically every Midgar resident with some money is a permanent consumer of Shinra, and *only* Shinra, hence the existence of a clear corporate monopoly. Corporate monopolies need not fear market competitors and as such can exercise a particular form of soft power and *control* over a populace that is arguably as effective as (if not more than) a nation state. If you combine this corporate soft control with that of an actual company city where the president and the board of directors can practically do as they wish, control is absolute. That this is how President Shinra (and likely Shinra's heir, Rufus, too) sees the people of their city and how society *ought to be organised* is genuinely terrifying. Your only worth to Shinra is as a compliant consumer – a resource inextricably linked to Mako energy. Anything less and you can live the remainder of your days invisible and poor in the crime-ridden slums below. While Disney would in all likelihood never reach similar levels of cartoon evil as Shinra, I wager

they too share a somewhat similar basic philosophy, as do most real corporations. Think how Disney continues to dominate pop culture, the resources and means they possess to stay so prevalent in the public consciousness, and what that power can do. Now imagine if you live in a city they have built.

Secondly, let us not forget that Shinra systematically purges identity. The lore of *Final Fantasy VII* states that where Midgar stands used to be eight individual towns that were since swallowed up to create a chimeric steel pizza. No one knows anything about these former towns anymore, much less their historical names. Cities in real life do swallow up smaller satellite towns when they expand and birth suburbs, but generally residents of these new city suburbs retain the name of their hometowns even as they are now part of a larger urban entity. Imagine the lengths it would take for a city authority to *actively remove from the people's collective consciousness basic facts about their own historical hometowns* or even who they are. Now they reside in unnamed sectors marked only with a number, as sterile and bereft of humanity as the myriad of serial numbers plastered all over the interiors of reactors and construction sites. It further illustrates the point that you – the individual you – do not matter. The *collective* you is what matters, a faceless mass useful only as a commodity.

Furthermore I could not help but notice *Final Fantasy VII's* loose allusions to aspects of Norse mythology. As someone who keenly ponders about the etymology of names in fiction and why they may have been specifically chosen by their creators, the very name 'Midgar' itself appears to be a clear contraction of 'Midgard', the mortal realm in Norse mythology. The inhabitants are mortal precisely because they are human, frail and ignorant of and blind to the other realms that surround them. In a way this heavily reminds me of the residents of the slums in the lower plates, unable to see or extend past their own squalor and vices, and practically invisible to the distant, ascended watchers in the very sky above they are cut

off from. They have no role in the utopian order, so the impoverished and disenfranchised are out of sight and out of mind.

I was initially tempted to consider the upper plate to be the figurative Asgard in this context simply by virtue of the fact that it is more affluent and literally situated above the slums. It quickly dawned on me that even the packed theatres putting on LOVELESS stage shows are just as part of the mortal realm as the folks in the Sector 5 slums. Their destinies are intertwined by the sheer fact that they are all at Shinra's mercy. One snap of a finger by the president is enough to permanently sunder their lives forever. Take a look at the scene where President Shinra unflinchingly orders for one plate to drop on the Sector 7 slums below simply to eradicate AVALANCHE. Countless souls lost and livelihoods inexorably damaged permanently because a hegemonic corporation with an iron grip over its own company city is incensed. As the carnage unravels, Shinra Headquarters stands loftily and unharmed over the entire metropolis like a gods' sanctuary - or rather, like Asgard. Atop its highest, hallowed floors would sit President Shinra, with a view of an entire city from every angle (sans the slums) so formidable it is akin to that of a deity in the sky. I liken him to the Norse god Heimdallr, whose remarkable clarity of vision and foresight allows him to visually detect the first threat facing Asgard (which would signify the start of Ragnarok). Perhaps the atmosphere at Shinra HQ is very much like the onset of Ragnarok when the company's top brass later see Diamond Weapon closing in!

“Your only worth to Shinra is as a compliant consumer – a resource inextricably linked to Mako energy. Anything less and you can live the remainder of your days invisible and poor in the crime-ridden slums below.”



A holographic model of the city used by the Midgar Rail System.

## Conclusion

To craft the ideal city is to implement commonly held ideas of how society ought to be organised in an urban environment. In that degree you can see how these are often considered to be utopian projects. This article has attempted to explore the loose parallels of both Walt Disney's EPCOT concept and *Final Fantasy VII*'s Midgar to discern what they inform us about this very topic when large corporations attempt to join in on the quest for utopia.

As private citizens who presumably cherish individual liberties, we generally have a hard limit on how much power corporations are allowed to exert over us. Imagine a corporation with the capital and clout to carefully construct a city with near-exclusive rights to dictate every term of residency. Most of us would naturally find something deeply unsettling about a society so inorganic and artificial. Would it necessarily be a utopia for us, or merely a potential nightmarish scenario where we practically surrender our individual liberties, identities and security to an omniscient, omnipotent central corporate fiefdom?

We should not be discouraged from continually seeking new ways to improve our cities and our standards of living. We simply need to stay vigilant, and be cognizant of the ways in which idealistic visions for utopia can be logically corrupted into the Midgars of tomorrow.



A darker Disney: was President Shinra also a visionary aspiring to build a better tomorrow? *FFVII* artwork by Tetsuya Nomura.



The proposed E.P.C.O.T.'s city centre and commercial sector, by Herbert Ryman. (c) The Walt Disney Company.



Midgar artwork from *Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII*.

# Square Enix's Early Announcements and Long Delays; an Examination

BY PADDY MCGEE



“

While Square did follow up that E3 with some footage during PlayStation Experience in December 2015, we have yet to see more footage. There have been updates, of course, with screenshots and such, but for the most part VII: REMAKE has sort of... disappeared.

## Introduction

If you've ever been even just a casual reader or listener to video game media, you'll have experienced this sensation before; your favourite game company announces a new IP (or even a sequel). They show a short trailer or even a playable demo. It's beautiful and stunning. It's the next stage for your favourite type of game. It makes that year's E3/TGS/Gamescom the best one so far!

Yet, the months steam by without even a hint of knowledge. The last trailer you saw was from 2015 and showed pre-alpha footage! Surely, they're finished now... right? Or they could at least give an update? Wrong! You've been had by the Early Announcement Goblin!

So, let's discuss Early Announcements!

## FF VII Remake - an Example of an Early Announcement

Seeing as this is a Final Fantasy magazine, we'd be remiss if we didn't refer to, what in recent times seems to be the biggest early announcement gone wrong: the *Final Fantasy VII* remake. A game which is, arguably, one of the most requested, hungered for and cried over remakes in gaming history.

Square Enix first announced this back in June 2015, during an E3 which featured such *knock-out hits* such as *No Man's Sky* and *Mass Effect: Andromeda*. Looking back now, there's a few games to be disappointed with from that E3.

Anyway, *Final Fantasy VII: Remake* was met with worldwide excitement. While there had been rumours going around for YEARS about a remake of the game, to have an actual announcement itself was solid gold! Finally, we had something solid from a company who'd already started burning trust- through the launch of a rather poorly-received core game- *Final Fantasy XIII* (which I reviewed last issue) – and through the rocky development of both *Final Fantasy Versus XIII* (a game we now know as *Final Fantasy XV*) and the early announcement of *Kingdom Hearts 3*.

While Square did follow up that E3 with some footage during PlayStation Experience in December 2015, we have yet to see more footage. There have been updates, of course, with screenshots and such, but for the most part *VII: Remake* has sort of... disappeared.

So, WHY would Square Enix announce a game so early? There are a few reasons: to reassure stakeholders, such as us fans, that they ARE in fact still working on the future and to embolden them with confidence; to pre-empt or even block up leaks that are revealing the game's existence anyway; to fill out a conference which,

if you look back now, has a GAPING hole where a mainline Final Fantasy game should fill in and, perhaps, to help sell the enhanced port of the original *Final Fantasy VII* that Square Enix released that year on iOS and PlayStation 4?

Another perspective, however, is to reassure the market themselves that they are still a company which can churn out hits with their biggest, oldest franchise. To put this into perspective: The announcement of *VII: Remake* shot Square Enix's Stock to the highest rating it had been since 2008 (which was, as a titbit, the year in which Square Enix's celebrations for the twentieth anniversary of the Final Fantasy franchise would have hit their zenith as, by now, the games developed for the initiative would have either been released or in the process of releasing).

This Early Announcement, and the radio silence which followed, served to both shatter trust from fans and to go on record as a core example of why you **SHOULD NOT ANNOUNCE GAMES EARLY**.

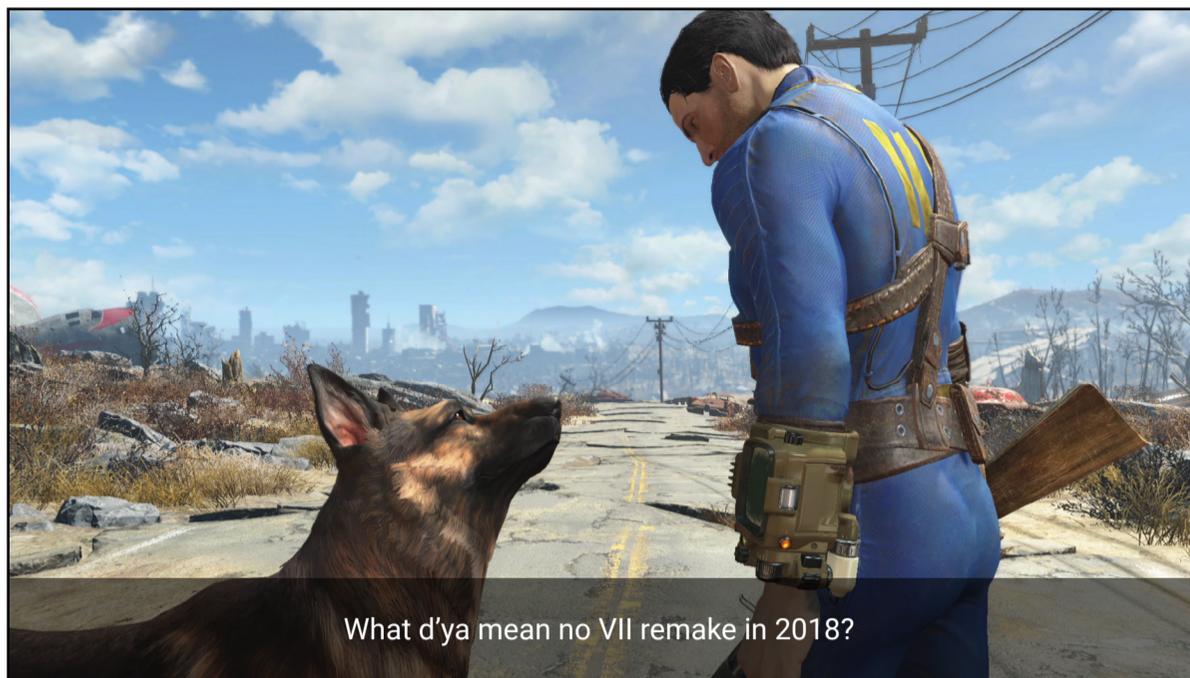
**FFVII:  
Remake  
INCOMING!  
Prepare for  
IMPACT!**



## Contrasting an Early Announcement with a Surprise Drop

So, contrast *Final Fantasy VII: Remake*, a game which has been begged, pleaded and hounded for – with *Fallout 4* – another game which had been begged, hounded and pleaded for. *Fallout 4* was easily one of the biggest, if not the biggest, surprise of E3 2015. It came, it saw, it conquered the hearts and wallets of fans across the world. All there was, to lead up to it, was a timer on Bethesda's website to an announcement which culminated in a game reveal and first trailer less than two weeks before E3. More details came almost immediately in E3 2015, with the release date being November of that year. *Fallout 4* went on to win multiple awards, including Game of the Year, and cemented itself in critical glory, so to speak. Fan reception was great, for the most part. They were sufficiently hyped and intrigued by the game from E3 so that, when the time came, they went out in droves to buy the game.

When you look at the two, it's pretty much the opposite of the spectrum in a marketing sense; an Early Announcement with a slow burn towards the gradual release of the game versus a shock-and-awe tactic of just dropping a trailer, release date (usually within the year) and demo. When you look at it on paper, it seems like Bethesda's approach may be the better choice, right? Hopes aren't broken, development isn't rushed (by a fan movement) and you get to be the "Big Reveal" at one of, if not the, biggest advertisement-cum-convention in the gaming world.



*Fallout 4*, however, was not exactly the darling you would be led to believe. While critics universally loved *Fallout 4*, it's not without its faults- the key fault being an aspect that is common to Bethesda games: bugs. *Fallout 4* was, without a doubt, a buggymess on release. It follows the usual Bethesda tactic of covering a burnt Belgian Waffle with scoops of ice cream: No matter how many scoops you cover it with, the base is still going to have a bad taste.

Also, look at the features: the conversation functionality, while quite impressive in the trailer during E3, is rather lousy and poor in execution. Dialogue choices don't necessarily match up with what you want, there is an element of luck to it. The shooter element (*Fallout* isn't a shooter game, but combat relies heavily on it) does leave much to be desired, while the VATS system itself is less "fun feature" and more "crutch required to progress".

While it's hard to compare a buggy-yet-live game to an as-of-yet non-existent game, there is the room to argue that the deadline for announcement-to-launch opened Bethesda up to a weakness that an Early Announcement might avoid:

taking the end user's opinion into account during development.

If we bring up *Kingdom Hearts 3*- a game which was also an Early Announcement, and a sticky point for SE fans- it would be very easy to believe that, after each announcement or new content drop, feedback would be fed back into the developers about gameplay or style. The next worlds to be shown in trailers could be dictated by that as well, along with gameplay changes and styles. If Bethesda wanted to take that into account (before live-patching begins), they would have had to announce *Fallout 4* significantly earlier in advance.

## Comparison of Bethesda and Square Enix

I chose Bethesda and Square Enix as I felt they mirror each other very well: both have primary franchises which are role-playing games with a hardcore fan audience (*Elder Scrolls* and *Final Fantasy*, respectively). While each game in the series has common threads, they are (for the most part) disconnected from each other with each game having its own narrative, characters and such that aren't

“I do think there’s a double standard with how some game developers are treated versus the other and I do think Square Enix, in relation to Final Fantasy and its related properties, get a chunk more flack than they should receive.”



An accurate screenshot of the Timber Maniacs waiting for KH3.

related. Each game in the franchises has their intense haters and adoring fans (*Morrowind* and *FFVII* being the two darlings, respectively).

So, if these companies are so similar, why is it one is held to a certain standard that the other isn't? In E3 2018, Bethesda announced both *Elder Scrolls VI* and a new IP called *Starfield*. How did they announce these, you may ask? By the slimmest, smallest trailers that showed very little, if anything, from these games. If we consider that *Starfield* is supposed to be released before *ESVI*, you could reasonably expect that it would, at the very least, have some sort of trailer behind it.

And yet, Bethesda has yet to really experience much, if any, backlash about this. *Elder Scrolls VI* has been in the pipeline since *Skyrim* launched in 2011, if not before that, and all we've received is a small little snippet? While we've all seen the memes and jokes about *Skyrim* being on every platform from the Nintendo Switch to the Commodore 64, I've yet to see much, if any, attacks on them or Todd Howard- a man who seems to be the darling of not only Bethesda but the Enthusiast gaming community at large.

Contrast this reaction with those from fans of Final Fantasy and Square Enix.

*Kingdom Hearts 3* is announced at E3 2013, with a teaser trailer. Following this, even though Square Enix had explicitly said that Tetsuya Nomura would focus on getting *Versus XIII/XV* over the line, they would show news and updates near every year-with multi-year announcements and trailers becoming common starting from 2017. This is along with the development of a *Prologue* chapter and re-releases of the *Final Mix* versions of the Sony games, at the same time, is... well, a lot of work for the franchise that, perhaps, Square Enix don't get credit for from the fans.

While I, personally, am not overly sympathetic to Square Enix over their recent choices- the early announcements of late are their own decision- I do think there's a double standard with how some game developers are treated versus the other and I do think Square Enix, in relation to Final Fantasy and its related properties, get a chunk more flack than they should receive.

## Where does the Issue Stem From?

So, why is it that Square Enix have been sectioned out as the main perpetrators of this "failed promises" debacle? There have been multiple

examples of Vapourware (software that never materialises) from everyone from Rockstar to inhouse Microsoft development, so why is Square special? Well, there's two major players at play: the fans and the developer, Square Enix.

The fans are, arguably, the most successful stakeholder when a games developer begins the development process. They are the people who will be buying the product, after all. They are the group who form attachments to the content and to the stories developers build and mould. There have been many examples- through either crowdfunding or simple demand- where media has been either brought back or created by sheer fandom power.

So, it's not a grab to say that fans get attached to these games; they want to see the next instalment of a franchise or the new direction a series is going to go in, but this sort of fandom has something of a downside; as a fan, you become entrenched with a franchise. In a sense, it becomes your possession. As such, fans fiercely defend their object of fandom, or- and this is important- they fiercely attack it when it doesn't abide by the standards which the fandom wants it to.



## Has development been FROZEN?

So, fans are possessive and get rapidly more possessive as developers give into their whims; in the last year, Kingdom Hearts fans have been spoon-fed details bi-monthly on the next game- the worlds, details, everything! Yet, if you ask the average Kingdom Hearts fan about it, they'll most likely just say that they want more information from Square Enix! This would even happen a day after E3, where Kingdom Hearts had one of the most revealing and dominant presentations during the entire event and announced multiple worlds, both new and returning!

Perhaps fans just want the best of all worlds. They want to see *everything* but also want to be surprised and not spoil the experience; they want a high-quality product but don't want to wait for the product to be sufficiently developed. While it might be Square Enix's fault for announcing early in the first place, they didn't exactly tell fans it would be done in X, Y or Z amount of time either.

Inversely, Square Enix themselves have been known to launch ideas

or concepts without having *actually* planned them through; the designers of *Final Fantasy XIII*, in particular, went through a huge number of changes to the battle system alone, and it wasn't until the demo of the game (which was packaged with the Blu-ray release of *Advent Children Complete*) that they had a real idea of how the game would play.

In fact, the ENTIRE *Fabula Nova Crystallis* compilation, of which *XIII* was a centre-point, ended up undershooting what the company had envisioned: it went from *XIII*, *Versus XIII* and *Agito XIII* to *XIII*, *XIII-2*, *FF XIII: Lightning Returns*, *Type-0* and *Agito*, with *Versus* itself becoming *Final Fantasy XV*, separated from the specific themes and references in the *FNC* compilation. This essentially tells us that Square Enix has a track record of not knowing what's going to happen but announcing anyway.

So, as with many things in life, the blame may lie in the middle. Perhaps fans expect too much from developers at times. Perhaps Square Enix, when in doubt, announce these

things early to get the ball rolling and to keep fans interested. When you mix the two together, you end up with a developer behind schedule and a frustrated fanbase; the loss of trust in Square Enix leads to the established fanbase becoming frustrated with the team- leading to the tense situation we have now, where fans passive-aggressively use memes such as "PLEASE BE EXCITED" to voice their annoyance.

## Conclusion

From my own background of software and being an avid video game fan, I feel like I can empathise with both sides. As a developer, there are times where you're optimistic about the project. It's running smoothly, you're hitting your deliverables and life is good! You feel confident; we can announce this, we can take in more scope.

Then, you hit a snag; code quality drops, functionality you expected to reuse is, in fact, not reusable so you need to rebuild it or even the third party you're relying on for some sort of integration lets the project down, so that's added as part of YOUR teams' scope. Issues happen and, sometimes, the tough meeting to explain why a code drop will be late- or not even finished- must happen with the client.

Now. Where most developers deal with companies who understand this, the clients of game developers are the public: their fans. While this is a little dismissive, the fans don't always appreciate how much work goes into developing a video game. Enterprise software is a cakewalk in comparison; these games take hundreds of developers working together in across multiple areas- and that's not just large shops but small places too.

This would explain as to why something major – such as binning CyberConnect's whole contribution to *FFVII*'s remake – would be enough to set the project back years- back to the stage where they may not have enough to show a new trailer- and so they won't.

But, on the developer's side, I feel Square Enix (or any developer for that matter) not only have a duty of being



honest, but they also have a duty of showing a product of marketable quality. Announcements as early as VII's are damaging to the brand, the community and the employees of the developer themselves.

Sometimes the choice of giving into demand and showing a product off when it's not ready isn't the best way to proceed. As a little anecdote to finish:

I once identified a bug within the product we were developing for a client. I thought up some proposals and scheduled a meeting with the business and a fellow developer. I presented the defect and instantly ended up going down the path of trying to implement a fix based on what the business wanted versus what I had originally thought up, because I was afraid of making the client unhappy and dissatisfied- even if that meant going down a suboptimal solution.

Halfway through the presentation, my co-worker/teammate comes in with the solution that we had decided. The business PREFERRED that solution over their own, and that was the

implementation they went with. The core point being: sometimes what you *think* you want, isn't what you *want*.

So perhaps we can attempt to be just that bit understanding of the issues surrounding video games and maybe, just maybe, Square Enix might read this article and take just a little bit of advice: double check with yourself before you demonstrate an unfinished game.

“

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Artwork by Wavechan / Wave's Art Stuff

# KUPOCON

THE FINAL FANTASY EVENTS CRAZIER THAN KEFKA

**K**upoCon is the most unique Final Fantasy fan gathering you could ever attend. The team (managed by lead organiser Alex Maine) have formed the perfect party! It's certainly an event suitable for any Biggs, Wedge or Jessie. These events fully involve attendees in a way that is very difficult to explain accurately to people who have not yet experienced a KupoCon, so read on as we endeavour to make it *crystal* clear.

## Pomathon: KupoCon's 'extra' UK event

When Pomingham Palace (London, February 3rd 2018) sold out within 24 hours of the tickets being released, KupoCon recognised the extraordinary levels of interest for KupoCon in the UK. Accommodating the growing numbers of the *Kupocrazed*, an additional event named Pomathon was created and hosted in Birmingham, September 8th 2018. It is often joked that Pomathon was KupoCon's unplanned child and yet this ambitious event turned out to be incredibly successful!

Spread out over three floors at the Birmingham Conference & Events Centre, with approximately 700 attendees (including 450 attending the evening event), Pomathon was the biggest KupoCon up to that time, yet it was still more intimate than conventions. This meant that you didn't need to fight to the death to get a seat in a panel, and you could actually get to meet people and mingle. Far from being just a big hall with people doing their own thing, KupoCon attendees were all welcomed into a family.

There were many magical moments. Only at a KupoCon could a trio of Freya cosplayers unite to perform a Cleyran step dance on stage, or could an organizer (Alan) 'propose' to his favourite character, Red XIII, serenaded by the Cosmo Canyon theme.



## The KupoCon Experience

Organisers Alex and Alan with Red XIII by Toneagraphy.

The higher tier your ticket, the more loot you will receive upon entry to any event, but enjoyment at KupoCon is free!

### At KupoCon you can:

- attend panels
- meet special guests
- play TriPom (KupoCon's popular collectible card game based on *Final Fantasy VIII's* Triple Triad). This facilitates attendee interaction via trading and competing in tournaments / friendly matches
- complete event specific inclusive activities and quests
- peruse merchandise stalls, including fan-made art and goods
- admire the efforts of cosplayers
- enjoy the wild evening events (adults only due to alcohol being served). Some might end up wobblier than a Flan...

However you choose to spend your time, you'll be begging Ultimecia for Time Compression immediately after an event ends!

## You're Not Alone!

FFF is impressed with the enthusiasm of KupoCon's special guests. In addition to their scheduled signing sessions, they have a tendency to interact enthusiastically with their fans, even forming genuine friendships. They enjoy themselves as much as the attendees.



## TAKE NOTE:

KupoCon have given FFF members special discounts due to our affiliation. Simply use the code **'FFF'** while purchasing a KupoCon ticket and you shall get **12% off your purchase.**



Neo Liu calls for rain but showers the crowd with euphoria!  
Taken by Digital Rogue Photography.

Pomathon's evening event was a chocobo-themed masquerade ball with Venetian-style chocobo masks and truly remarkable live musical performances from Neo Liu, Maiko Horisawa and Koyo Sonae delivering a mixture of *Kingsglaive* songs. When attendees heard Neo Liu's *Calling for Rain* for the first time in the tavern scene of *Kingsglaive*, they could never have anticipated that they would eventually end up dancing the conga to it while it is performed live (with the actors and eventually the musicians joining in)! Maiko also sang moving renditions of other songs, including *FFVIII's Eyes on Me*. All musicians combined their talents for a powerful performance of *Stand by Me*; a pertinent track for *FFXV* and the perfect song to capture the community spirit of KupoCon.

KupoCon Pomathon also held a private screening of the *FFXV* movie *Kingsglaive* at The Electric. Takeshi Nozue (Director) and Hajime Tabata (Producer) recorded a special message for KupoCon (which former Square Enix Community Manager Dan Seto arranged). With the special guests (the actors and musicians involved with the movie) attending the screening alongside a theatre filled with Final Fantasy fans, it was a truly surreal moment to complete the event.

## The fantasy continues... Don't miss out!

Word of KupoCon's excellency has been spreading like the thousand needles of a cactuar. The atmosphere and sense of community in this Final Fantasy experience is unrivalled.

Final Fantasy Forums has been affiliated with KupoCon since June 2016 and has promoted the event both within and outside the forum. A number of our members (and individuals in FFF's wider diaspora) have enjoyed past KupoCon events and are set to attend events in the future.

Come and meet us! Our 'Promised Land' still calls us. You'll be spitting chocobo feathers if you miss out!



© Digital Rogue Photography

## Final Fantasy stars at KupoCon have included:

- **Susan Calloway:** singer-songwriter and musician known for various songs for *Final Fantasy XIV* and *Distant Worlds* performances.
- **Ray Chase:** voice actor of Noctis Lucis Caelum, *Final Fantasy XV*, and Edgar Figaro, *World of Final Fantasy*.
- **Julia McIlvaine:** assorted voices in *Lightning Returns: Final Fantasy XIII* and Garuda, *Final Fantasy XV*.
- **Jon Campling:** likeness of King Regis and motion capture of King Regis and motion capture of Ardyn Izunia, *Kingsglaive*.
- **Liam Mulvey:** voice, likeness, and motion capture of Libertus Ostium, *Kingsglaive*, *Final Fantasy XV: Comrades*, and motion capture for Clarus Amicitia, *Kingsglaive*.
- **Adam Croasdell:** voice actor of Ignis Scientia, *Final Fantasy XV*.
- **Will Bowden:** motion capture and voice of Pruvia Colpus, and motion capture of Pelna Khara, among many others, *Kingsglaive*.
- **Adrian Bouchet:** voice, likeness, and motion capture of Drautos / General Glauca, *Kingsglaive*.
- **Amy Shiels:** voice actress of Lunafreya Nox Fleuret, *Final Fantasy XV*.
- **Neo Liu:** musician and singer behind 'Calling for Rain', *Kingsglaive*.
- **Maiko Horisawa:** singer, *Kingsglaive*.
- **Koyo Sonae:** musician, score producer / composer agent, *Kingsglaive*.
- **Dan Seto:** former Square Enix Community Manager.
- **M.J. Gallagher:** author of popular fan FFVII novelisation and also 'The Nibelheim Incident' with illustrators **AJ Hateley** and **Crimson Sun**.
- **Among others!**

### On their way:

- **Robbie Daymond** (voice actor of Prompto, *Final Fantasy XV*) is set to attend The Wee Pom for his KupoCon debut! Be sure to get some snaps with him!
- **Pontus Hultgren**, the composer of KupoCon's exclusive Mogzart series of Final Fantasy cover EPs is set to attend The Wee Pom.
- **Quinton Flynn** (voice actor of Axel, *Kingdom Hearts*, Reno, *Final Fantasy VII Compilation*, and Isaaru, *Final Fantasy X*) will be at The Wee Pom. Got it memorised?

## Upcoming events: Please be excited!

For more information on KupoCon, please head over to their website at

[www.kupocon.com](http://www.kupocon.com)

KupoCon feeds fans with regular updates causing them to gradually inflate like Bombs until they explode with excitement. Here are some upcoming events which we strongly encourage you to attend.

**The Wee Pom:** Scottish event set for January 26th, 2019

**Location:** Hilton, Glasgow, Scotland

We would *Wark 500 Miles* to be here with you...

**The Bigger Pom:** USA event set for June 29th, 2019

**Location:** Robert Treat Hotel, Newark, New Jersey

If you pay for the evening event then you get to join in with the glamorous *FFXV*-themed *Insomnia Crystal Ball*!

**Pomex:** London UK event set for September 21st, 2019

**Location:** Novotel London West, London (130% bigger than the previous London venue!)

**Tickets:** On sale March 25th, 2019.

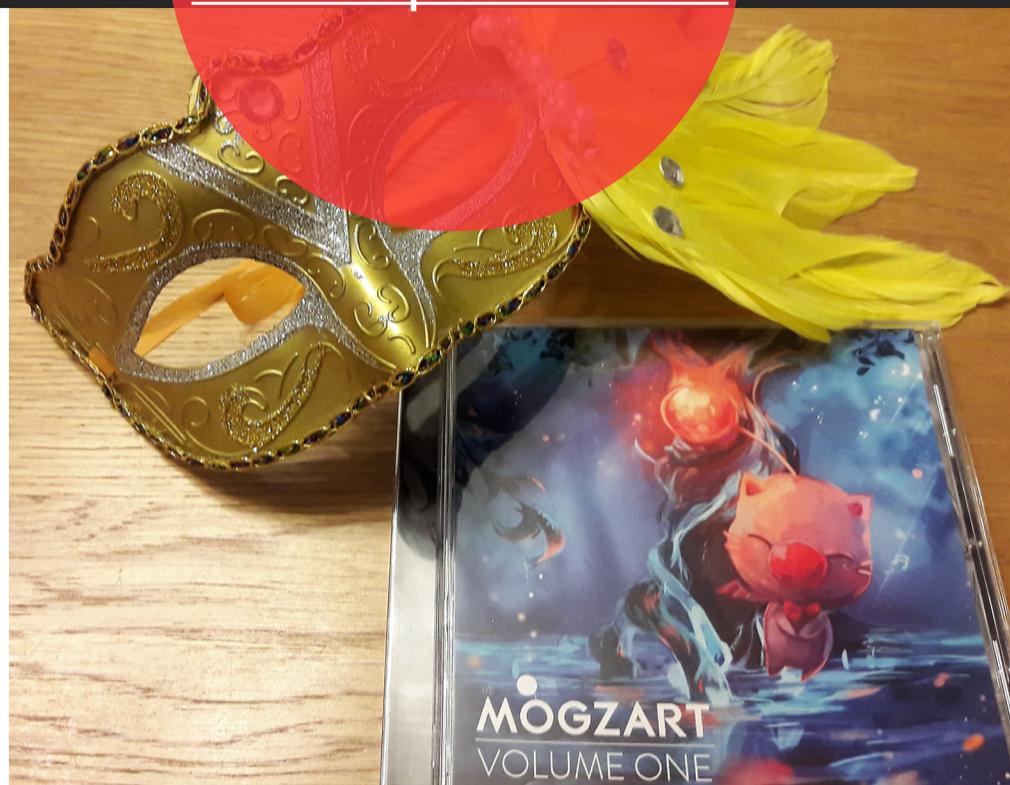
This landmark 10th KupoCon event is set to be enormous! Expect details in the new year!

**'Project Dawn Shard'** (working title): Sydney event planned for 2020.

**Location:** To be confirmed, Sydney.

Crikey! KupoCon's going down under to Sydney, Australia, in 2020! Further details are to be announced in the new year but we're confident it'll be a g'day, mate!

There are other upcoming events in the works which remain a mystery, including an untitled return to Vancouver on Nov 16th, 2019!



KupoCon keeps levelling up its sophistication! Dionysos' copy of *Mogzart: Volume One* (composed by [Pontus Hultgren](#)) and chocobo masquerade mask from Pomathon.



If you know people who might like to attend any event, give them a doink!

Special thanks to [Toneagraphy](#) and [Digital Rogue Photography](#)!

 <https://www.facebook.com/DigiRoguePhotography>

 <https://twitter.com/toneagraphy>

Follow KupoCon on social media for regular updates:

 <https://www.facebook.com/kupoconEN>

 <https://twitter.com/KupoConEN>

# A conversation with **Cosmo Canyon's** celebrated cosplayer

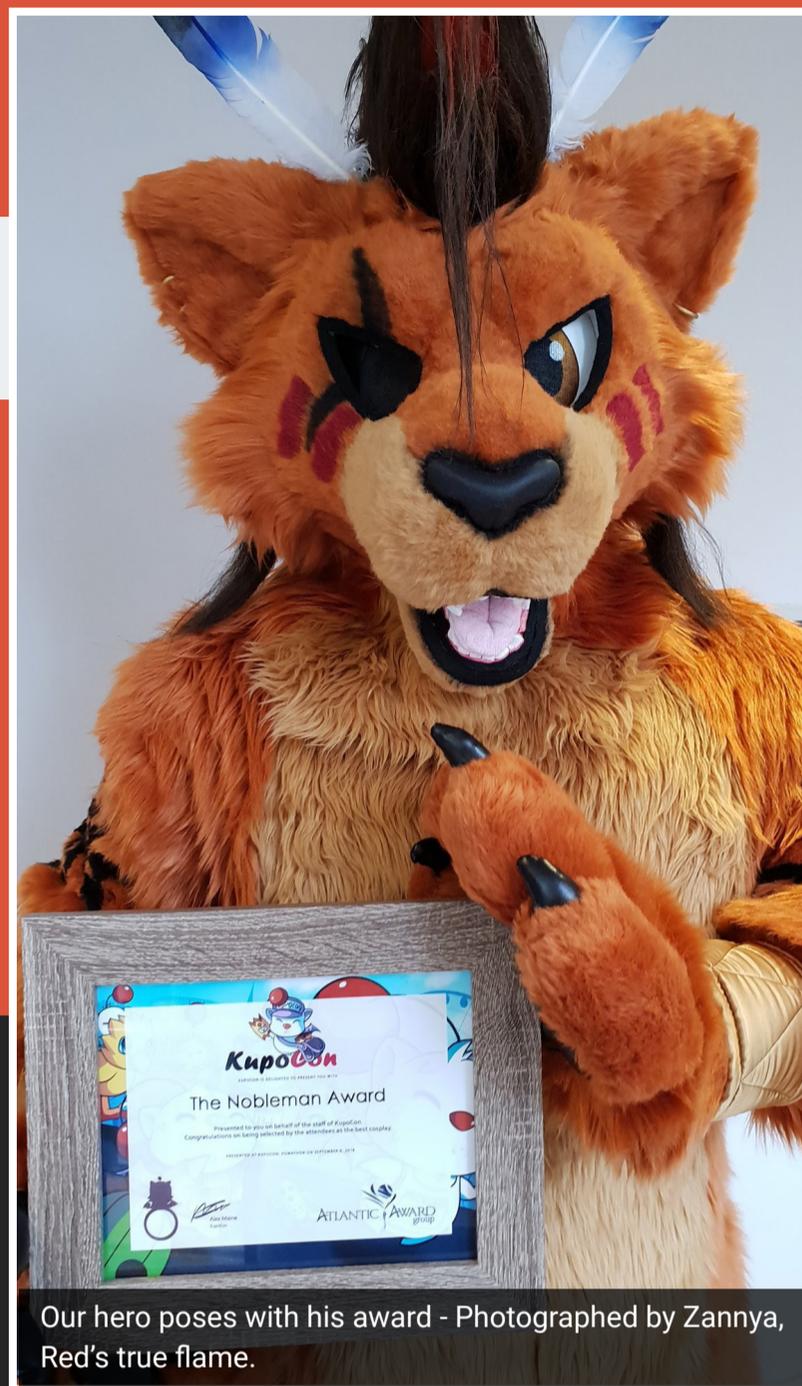
## AN INTERVIEW WITH **RED XIII**

Dressed as Red XIII / Nanaki (FFVII's beloved quadruped combining wolf and lion characteristics) in an elaborately detailed fursuit, cosplayer The Real Red XIII (AKA Johnathon) has been taking the UK cosplay and convention scene by storm in 2018.

Some of our members had the honour of meeting him for the first time at KupoCon Pomathon (Birmingham, September 8th 2018) where he never failed to bring a smile to all... For all his efforts, Red XIII was deservedly awarded KupoCon's 'Nobleman Award' at the event (a people's choice award for best cosplay). At Pomathon's evening event he even wore a suit *on top* of his fursuit!

Like his namesake, Red XIII is both friendly and likeable, and positively photogenic. Many attendees cherish their selfies with Red XIII as mementos of their KupoCon experience.

Like the eternal flame of Cosmo Canyon, Red XIII has warmed our hearts. His dedication to cosplay has certainly impressed FFF.



Our hero poses with his award - Photographed by Zannya, Red's true flame.

### Sit down and follow our fireside chat...

**How long have you been a cosplayer and for how long as Red XIII?**

Red featured as my first cosplay, and hopefully the start of many more! I first suited in Red at a con back in May 2018.

**What is it that draws you towards Red XIII?**

Roll back to first year in secondary school and a good friend let me borrow FF7. I boasted saying I'd have it back in a week, boy was I wrong. It was love at first save, but throughout the story I connected most with Red's character. I likened him to how I wanted to be: young, spirited but wise, and a strong warrior! His Native American theme also interested me and his wolf like ways.

**Congratulations on winning KupoCon's 'Nobleman Award'! Have you won many cosplay awards before?**

Thank you! It was a great honour and just to see the smiles on everyone's faces taking selfies throughout the day was enough. We try to get out to as many cons as we can with Red and we have been lucky enough to win a few. Our first was Southport CC, followed by MCM Manchester masquerade, then the much loved KupoCon and most recently the Glasgow heat of the Championship of Cosplay run by Reed Pop MCM.

**You must get very hot (and not just your tail!), so how do you keep from overheating?**

Yes, heat is a big factor in such a cosplay and heat exhaustion is a real threat. To stay cool I use an ice vest designed for performers and we built a fan into Red's muzzle to keep a cool breeze on my face.

**We understand that there is a team behind the Red XIII cosplay. How large is the team?**

Most certainly. Me and my wife Zannya make up the team behind Red, and trust me, it takes two to Red.

**What can you tell us about the creative processes involved when creating your Red XIII fursuit?**

Research was key to his cosplay design. I already knew the character well, but deciphering features from actual character art was vital so as to find the right materials. Fortunately, Red has a few detailed models that I got a hold of and the *Advent Children* film gave great material to reference. But at the same time I didn't want him to lose all of his 90s game features, hence the eye design.

Creating his legendary mohawk style mane took some doing, in the end it took a special order of NFT material from the US and a layer of foam, followed by some super strong hair spray. Another feature hidden away is in his tail, we had to come up with a way to keep his tail curved. This was achieved with a rolled aluminium rod which was slotted through an oval plate, then the assembly was fitted to a kidney belt or body builder belt. A final signature feature is his many tattoos. These were referenced carefully, before creating a pattern and then painstakingly hand sewing into the main body suit.

**If you could cosplay any other Final Fantasy character, who would be your next hot pick?**

We already have an amazing cosplay lined up for next season, however some personal favourites of mine are Auron and Squall.

**How did you find your first KupoCon experience? Did you have a favourite moment?**

KupoCon will forever be etched in our memory as an amazing experience. I never knew you could fit so much into a one day con! Also the comradery of the team and the love between all attendees is testament to how well the convention works. As for a favourite bit... I simply couldn't choose, however... being in cosplay and buying a Red XIII

print with Gil has got to be a fine moment.

**Have any opportunities opened up for you as a result of being Red XIII?**

Jumping into the cosplay scene has certainly introduced us to some fantastic people. We were very fortunate enough to meet some editors of forums \*cough\* and a small team starting up a cosplay magazine, so hopefully we can contribute to such fine works.

**Do you have any advice for potential future cosplayers?**

My biggest advice to any future cosplayer is this: no matter your skill, no matter your budget, no matter your looks, ability or background...make...that...cosplay! There is nothing more inspiring than seeing a great cardboard cosplay or a character portrayed differently because that's who you are. As long as your excitement for the character shines through, then that's all that matters, because cosplay is for everyone!

**See you at The Wee Pom?**

My kilt is packed and ready.

---

It'll be great to see him there!

**You can find Red XIII at:**

 <https://twitter.com/therealredxiii>

 <https://www.instagram.com/therealredxiii/>



Red is ready to heat up the dance floor! Taken by **Digital Rogue Photography**.

# Loss and Grief; Video Games

By Paddy McGee

## Introduction

Life has its ups and downs; its high times and low points. Trauma, grief, loss, sadness and melancholy... They're all a part of this. The loss of a loved one: a partner, a brother, a sister or a parent can shatter your whole life. It can make or break you- it changes you, in some way, forever. We can try to deny this; we can hold onto old selves as much as we can, but at the end of it all, there's always something different.

But, maybe, our hobbies can open a path to help? To guide us, not back to what we once were, but to a healthier version of what we are now? Perhaps they can steer us towards the love and support we need to get better; **no man is an island after all.**

Or, simply put, they allow us an escape from our feelings for a while? For an hour, maybe two, we could be someone else. Another person, stronger and braver than ourselves?

## Escapism

A common way people have learned to deal with the more difficult, harsher aspects of life is through escapism; that is, escaping away from the issue or emotion at hand and taking a break from the cycle. It's why people take holidays.

"Video games, inherently through their nature of wrapping interactivity, entertainment and narrative together, offer a focused means of escape."

Video games, inherently through their nature of wrapping interactivity, entertainment and narrative together, offer a focused means of escape. Think about it. When was the last time you decided to play some games to get away from the stresses of work? What about the time where you've been in a situation or place where you don't want to be, but all you can think about is **"I want to finish that new mission in Spider-Man."**

Video games are a means of getting away from yourself; you're not just watching (for example) Frodo climbing Mount Doom, you ARE Frodo Baggins climbing Mount Doom. It's a very powerful feeling for the average Joe.

But, to go from someone who has just lost something- be it through death or otherwise- to a hero who saves the day through willpower and strength alone? Just consider the sheer weight of that; the sheer idea of being able to go from losing a loved one... to being a character who can save people?



Escape.



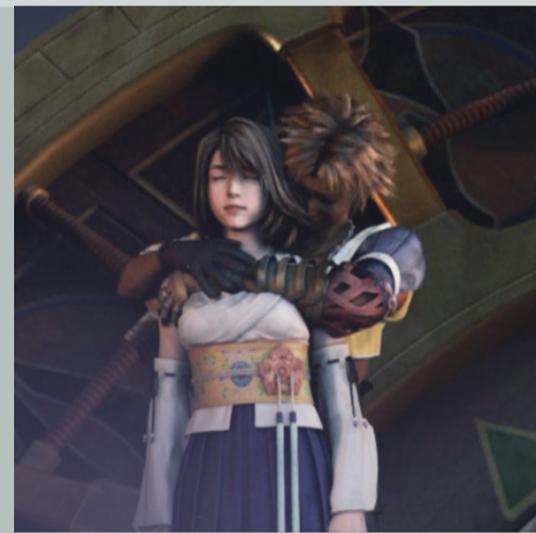


From my own experience, it's a very potent feeling. The week before my father died, he had been brought into hospital for care. It was a rather intense and emotional time; each hour he was around and smiling, my hope of his coming home increased. Each time I saw the fragility in his eyes, the loose lack of strength as he held a cup, my hopes were smashed like glassware against a cold marble floor. The inconsistency was infuriating; why does he look so strong while he sits, but so weak when he stands?

Sad as it sounds, part of the reason I got through that time **WAS** due to Video Games. It was *Horizon: Zero Dawn*, funny as it sounds, that got me through the

death, the planning (and execution of) my father's funeral and the echoing silence that encroached during the weeks after. I'm not sure what specific aspect of the game kept me going (the narrative, in all honesty, is a little weak and the side quests leave much to be desired) but it kept me sane for the one week where I found myself closest to the edge.

I've never finished the game. I'd like to think it was just due to my lack of follow-through... but maybe, just maybe, it's tied to my dad. Maybe if I finish the game, I'll finally accept he's gone.





## The Video Game Community

Part, if not the primary aspect, of *video gaming* that makes it a community is the **aura of acceptance**. It's why I stick around, even as my interest (or rather, having the time to **be** interested) shrinks throughout the years.

A central aspect to dealing with loss is being able to talk about it. While "bottling it up" is used as a metaphor for the holding in of emotions, I think it links closer to that of painting an object repeatedly; each coat, while thin alone, builds up over time into a thick, surprisingly tough barrier. Every time we want to express something- a fun memory of the deceased, tears for the pain of loss- if we receive a rebuke, we paint the object with another coat. With each progressive coat applied, it gets harder and harder to reach the pain- the object in the centre.

After enough time (and paint), we realise: *"I don't get to talk about that here. These people don't care about it."* It's a tough contradiction to swallow when we contrast in the messages spread every day in the media to the real-life reactions of your fellow humans: **"Talk about your feelings; just don't do it here."**

We also see how the video game community itself can experience loss; and celebrate life. So many relationships within this community (particularly so with the advent of online gaming on consoles) have been formed and existed, entirely, through some sort of game. Best friends, lovers and even spouses can be met through something as simple as a game of *Call of Duty*.

**"A central aspect to dealing with loss is being able to talk about it."**

We've all seen (if you've ever partook in reading some games media) the **Public Interest** stories about this sort of thing; in MMORPG's it's a rather common occurrence for guilds to hold funerals for their sadly-passed on guild members, it's common for developers to honour families or loved ones through dedication of games or adding in Easter Eggs. It's rather strange how open and accepted this is- to have such a public display of honouring someone, outside of the close family having a funeral.

## My Own Experiences

I remember the first two weeks of March 2017 like they were the last two weeks I just experienced. I remember getting the call, when I was in work: *"Dad's been taken into the hospital. You need to get here."* I recall the fear welling up inside me, my fingers tapping the buttons to call my childhood best friend for a lift.

I remember going to work on Monday, having heard he sounded better... I remember rushing to the hospital within 20 minutes of getting to work. I remember how his hand still felt warm to the touch.

I can never forget the funeral; *Bridge Over Troubled Water* played throughout the service, the hushed laughter and joy for some- it was a get-together after all! They all got together as our world fell apart.

I can remember the moment I told one of my friends I game with. I remember the sobbing I heard over the microphone, and the well-wishing card that arrived later that week. I remember the strange, puzzling duality of how it was handled: in my daily life, the topic- and even talking to me- would be avoided but when I was in this community, I was encouraged to speak. I felt ignored by one and enriched by the other.

I can remember the gradually more frequent texts- the feeling of not being alone, of knowing people wanted to hear from me, to know I was okay. It didn't always, or even mostly, need to be about my dad (in fact, it was easier when it wasn't about him).



“When we find ourselves in the darkest moments, it can be the unexpected that brings us out of the tunnel.”

Just talking about something so simple as “What did you think of *Doom*?” or “You really think *GTA V* is that terrible?” was wonderful experience.

The games themselves gave me a distraction to focus on; the people provided me with a healthy platform to release some of my grief and were there for me- in their own way- when I needed it. Perhaps it’s heavy handed to say that video games got me through my father’s death, but they certainly took away some of the pain and helped me find some true, honest friends along the way.

## Conclusion

When we find ourselves in the darkest moments, it can be the

unexpected that brings us out of the tunnel. Video games were one of those “unexpected” things for me. They gave me a centre and a support group when I felt like I had nothing. They certainly didn’t, and could not, take the pain away from me- a feeling of loss that exists to this day- instead, the community provided me with tools that are so, so much more important: the tools to feeling through emotions clearly, to be independent, yet still able to open up to a friend when it’s needed. It’s certainly not perfect- nothing is in this world- but it’s a lesson I’m eternally grateful for.

So, when your next rainy day comes along, maybe it’s worth looking into your interests; it helped me: it could help you.





# MELODIES OF LIFE

## FEATURING SIX/KIRA

Six/Kira is one of FFF's most treasured members. She is known to many as a dedicated Global and Spira Moderator (looking after our forum and artistic section), staff member, a GFX artist, and also a singer and musician.

But did you also know that Six has created *FFXIV* parody songs? In creatively rewriting the lyrics of popular songs to fit *FFXIV* themes, Six has written a variety of parodies dealing with particular jobs and their roles in party dynamics. Like a *Siren of Spoofs*, Kira has performed them herself and posted her work for us on FFF.

We think they are brilliant!

## IN HER VOICE

### Which is the very first FF parody that you did?

Ew, we actually have to go there? My first FF parody was *Tank Something* by A Great Big World featuring Christina Aguilera. I came across a parody on YouTube, titled the same but hey, I believe it was a YouTube channel called FFXIVParodies. My parody was heavily influenced by them, it wasn't until after realising that parody that writing the lyrics to the songs came more natural.

### What inspires you to write the lyrics?

Making fun of the classes our FF members main is my main inspiration. I'm a terrible person.

### How long does it take you (from writing to recording)?

Recording doesn't take me long at all. I don't use any fancy equipment. It's always just Voice Recorder on my iPhone. I should probably look into upgrading, but I really enjoy these parodies because they are spur of the moment "fun". I wouldn't want to get all technical about it.

Writing might be a bit more tricky, because I do want all the words to fit the original formed sentences, otherwise I feel the parodies sound 'off'. Sometimes I have to change the key of the instrumental because it's too low for me to sing; fun fact: the *Fairies* parody went through that process. I'd say on a good day I could have it all done within 3 hours.

### Which *FFXIV* classes have you written song parodies for so far?

There are small references to classes in certain songs, which I'll just list in general. But so far:

01

#### Tank Something

parody of *Say Something* by A Great Big World ft. Christina Aguilera  
Aimed at tanks, also mentions the Monk job.

02

#### Cure II

parody of *Rude* by Magic!  
Mainly aimed at White Mages

03

#### Flashy Pally

parody of *Teenage Dirtbag* by Wheatus  
Parody uplifting the Paladin job

04

#### Big Mistake

parody of *Mad World* by Gary Jules\*  
Makes fun of one of my best friends (Mitsuki) and her amazing "Ioldragoon" class.

05

#### Losing My Compassion

parody of *Losing My Religion* by R.E.M.  
Aimed at the Dark Knight job.

06

#### Fairies

parody of *Heathens* by Twenty One Pilots  
Aims at Scholars hating their co-healers: White Mage and Astrologian.

\*Originally written and performed by Tears for Fears, Gary Jules' slower, more haunting cover became iconic in its own right.

**LIKE THE SOUND OF THAT ?**  
You can experience these covers  
for yourself at:

<https://www.finalfantasyforums.net/threads/final-fantasy-xiv-song-parodies.61377/>

**CLICK LINK TO PLAY FAIRIES**

## FAIRIES

(Scholar-themed parody of *Heathens* by Twenty One Pilots)

All my friends are fairies, take it slow  
Watch and learn as I pop Aetherflow  
Please don't make any sudden moves  
At least until this Astro improves

Welcome to the room of healers  
Who have rooms of fairies that they caught one day  
Tucked away  
Just because we leave Eos at the door  
Doesn't mean our love will stray  
Selene all day

You'll never know what Astros are willing to do  
Or what the next White Mage is gonna put you through  
You'll think how did I get here, now I'm stuck with you  
But after all I've said  
Please don't forget

All my friends are fairies, take it slow  
Watch and learn as I pop Aetherflow  
Please don't make any sudden moves  
At least until this White Mage improves

They say Dissipation leaves a certain smell  
Deployment Tactics didn't work out well  
Fairy trust issues not to mention  
Co-healers and their twisted intentions

You'll never know what Astros are willing to do  
Or what the next White Mage is gonna put you through  
You'll think how did I get here, now I'm stuck with you  
But after all I've said  
Please don't forget

All my friends are fairies, take it slow  
Watch and learn as I pop Aetherflow  
Please don't make any sudden moves  
At least until these healers improve

My fairy's gone, I should've used Sustain  
No Aetherflow and no Energy Drain  
This White Mage and Astro are a bust  
Consider becoming one of us

# MELODIES OF LIFE

## WALTZ FOR THE TUNE



### FFF's thoughts about the *FFVIII* Original Soundtrack



It is often joked that *Final Fantasy VIII* never gets the attention that it deserves. Like an untended Garden, its creator (Square Enix) doesn't seem to have its eyes on this particular title since they seem hesitant to remaster or rerelease the game. Out of all its peers, *FFVIII* is the last to be picked for the squad.

Not so on FFF!

We aren't going to launch ourselves in anger at Square Enix on social media (like the red, misty column of moon monsters ejecting themselves onto *FFVIII*'s planet during the Lunar Cry). We prefer a more positive approach towards attracting an appreciation for this game.

In a recent poll, FFF members selected the *Final Fantasy VIII Original Soundtrack* (composed by Nobuo Uematsu in 1999) to be our members' choice soundtrack of this magazine issue. It was extremely close, but this soundtrack's triumph shows that the fandom's love grows for the album!

What makes *FFVIII*'s soundtrack so special to our members and why does it make us *shuffle or boogie*? Hear it straight from the chocobos' beaks here!

### MUSINGS OF A MUSICIAN

"Fithos Lusec Wecos Vinosec" - on these four words starts *Liberi Fatali*, an epic theme with Latin choirs for probably one of the most beautiful openings from the Final Fantasy games.

Love, hate, treason, magic - these are all elements needed for a versatile soundtrack.

*Julia, Roses and Wine, Waltz of the Moon, Love Grows, Eyes On Me* and *Fragments of Memories* are some of the tracks that will work on this Love emotion.

For those loving action, *SeeD, The Mission, Force Your Way, Never Look Back, The Man with the Machine Gun, Only a Plank Between One and Perdition, The Legendary Beast, Maybe I'm A Lion* and *The Extreme* will please you.

If you're looking for beautiful melodies and relaxing tracks, *Balamb Garden, Breezy* and the very emblematic *Fisherman's Horizon* will be your friends.

For a touch of sadness, I'm voting for *Drifting* - these moving strings will not leave you indifferent.

*Timber Owls* for a touch of fun and *Shuffle or Boogie* for a catchy groove.

*Succession of Witches, Fithos Lusec Wecos Vinosec, Lunatic Pandora, Compression of Time* and *The Castle* will send you in the very fantasy and magical side of this game where good and evil are fighting for space and time domination.

To finish I'll quote *Find Your Way*, a beautiful track that will bring you into a magical and mysterious atmosphere while you try to solve some puzzle and are looking for secrets.

With this *Final Fantasy VIII* soundtrack Nobuo Uematsu has written a beautiful page of Final Fantasy music history with most of the emblematic love themes of the franchise.



Duhemsounds is a French musician specialising in covers of video game music (including, but not limited to, Final Fantasy). It is his ambition to revisit the tracks of your childhood. His recent *Star Series* of covers experimentally explores the beauty in the technical elements of musical renditions.

Please listen for yourselves!

Like, subscribe, and follow Duhemsounds here:



## FFF's feedback on the *FFVIII* Original Soundtrack

### ZaXo Ken'Ichi

"Broadly speaking, I like *FFVIII*'s soundtrack largely because it's so involved in the emotions of the characters. Games like *FFIV* or *FFVI* rely on a lot of big tracks that score the game like a movie. *FFX*'s soundtrack captures the fight between religion and technology well, with *FFIX* and *FFXII* capturing the feel of the world. *FFVII*'s soundtrack follows the emotional through-line of the narrative. But *VIII* is best at capturing the small details of each character's emotions in a scene. Maybe that's just me, but the intimate nature of *VIII*'s soundtrack as a whole feels unique to it."

### Vivi-Gamer

"One of my favourite tracks is *Silence & Motion*; I love how it has the high pitch tunes slowly plodding along then transitions into a layered futuristic soundscape. The sounds just make me think of chemistry experiments, very fitting for exploring the vibrant city of Esthar - which feels so different to anything else within the game and much richer and diverse in colour than other cityscapes in sci-fi I've seen. Another favourite of mine is *The Successor*, which I think encapsulates everything from the journey, from a sense of peril to a softer third act which to me feels very comforting - I've always loved how this track ends, as if it's almost giving the listener a welcoming hug after a long journey.

It's also the first soundtrack to have a hit single with a vocal recording by Faye Wong, which I really appreciate and brought us further brilliant vocal tracks in *FFIX* and *FFX*.

While I have focused on the OST I also want to give a special mention to the *Final Fantasy VIII Piano Collections*. It is by far the best of the bunch as I feel a lot of the other Piano Collections stray too far from the original compositions, but not this one."

### Sly

"The reoccurring *Liberi Fatali* line, 'Fithos Lusec Wecos Vinosec', is made to sound like Latin. Even though it's gibberish, it's an anagram of 'Succession of Witches' and 'Love', which in a way are time compressed into the song. I don't think a lot of people know about it.

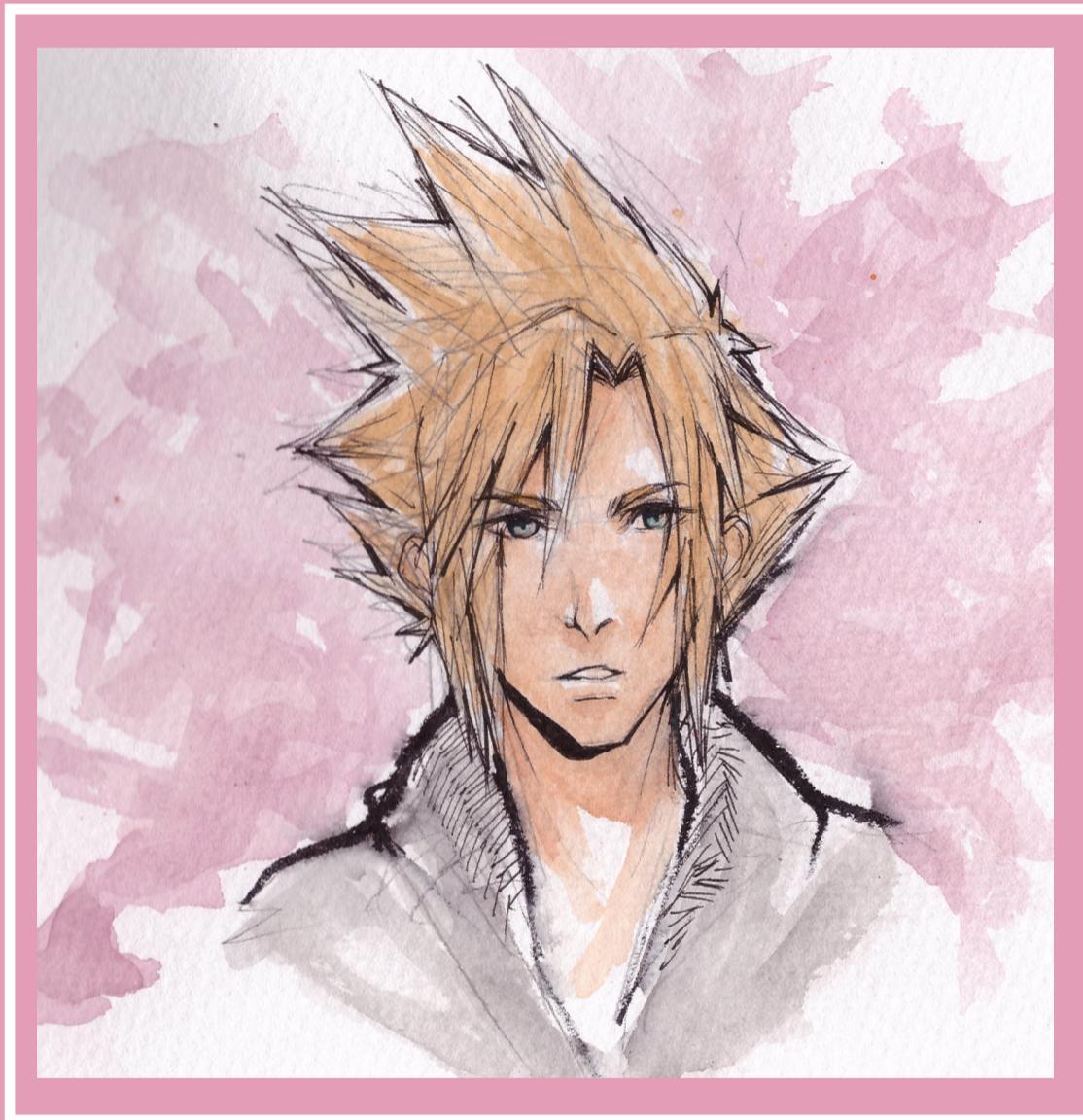
The lead up music to the battle with Edea: from the assassination walk-through, the parade sequence, Irvine's missed shot, the mad dash to the gate, and the battle, which ends in mission failure, Squall's possible death, and the end of the disc is probably the most powerful sequence of song lead events in FF.

*Eyes On Me* could be the best known. *Timber Owls* and *Balamb Garden* are great idle music. *Find You Way*, *Heresy* and *The Castle* are excellent spooky dungeon stuff. *Waltz for the Moon* totally makes you fall in love with Rinoa. *SeeD* and *The Landing* really gets you hyped on your first mission. The *Triple Triad Shuffle* or *Boogie* is drilled into my brain."

### Galadín

"I love the diversity and eclectic sound of *FFVIII*'s soundtrack. Not only are there many standout and unusual tracks, but as an entire piece of work, the soundtrack delivers an experience not found within the more blended soundtracks of following FF titles. There are no sweeping scores in *FFVIII* (albeit in the original iterations, the orchestral versions within *Distant Worlds* are very dramatic indeed!), however there is this sense of setting and tone from each piece, going from sweet and nostalgic (as with *Breezy* and *Balamb Garden*), to desolation and isolation (*Find Your Way*, *The Salt Flats*), along to intense action (*Man With The Machine Gun*, *Maybe I'm A Lion*, *Only A Plank Between One And Perdition*), right into just plain weird sounding (like with *Residents* and *Lunatic Pandora*). This is a soundtrack I still actively listen to often and consider it to be good listening independent of the game itself (although I enjoy playing that too!)."

# RELM'S GALLERY



## ARTIST SPOTLIGHT: SHIVAS

Tami (known on the forum as shivas) is our Final Fantasy-section Moderator. A chemical engineering graduate from Dubai, Tami is also a magnificent artist and her endeavors with this hobby continue to entrance FFF. One day she produced speed sketches of FFF members' FFXIV characters which were of impeccable quality within 10-15 minutes, making it seem effortless, to the applause of FFF members!

Tami started drawing as a hobby in 2011. After experimenting with a variety of mediums, she discovered that she is attracted to watercolours in particular. Tami often takes inspiration from Final Fantasy soundtracks for her drawing and she finds Final Fantasy characters to be the most enjoyable subject matter.

We asked Tami some questions to sketch a profile of her talent.

### **When did you start making art?**

It started back in middle school; my best friend at the time used to trace anime characters and bring her drawings to school. I thought they looked amazing and wanted to start drawing so I asked my

parents to take me to the book fair and I found a "How To Draw Manga" guidebook (I still have it somewhere around!) and it went from there.

### **Where do you typically create your work?**

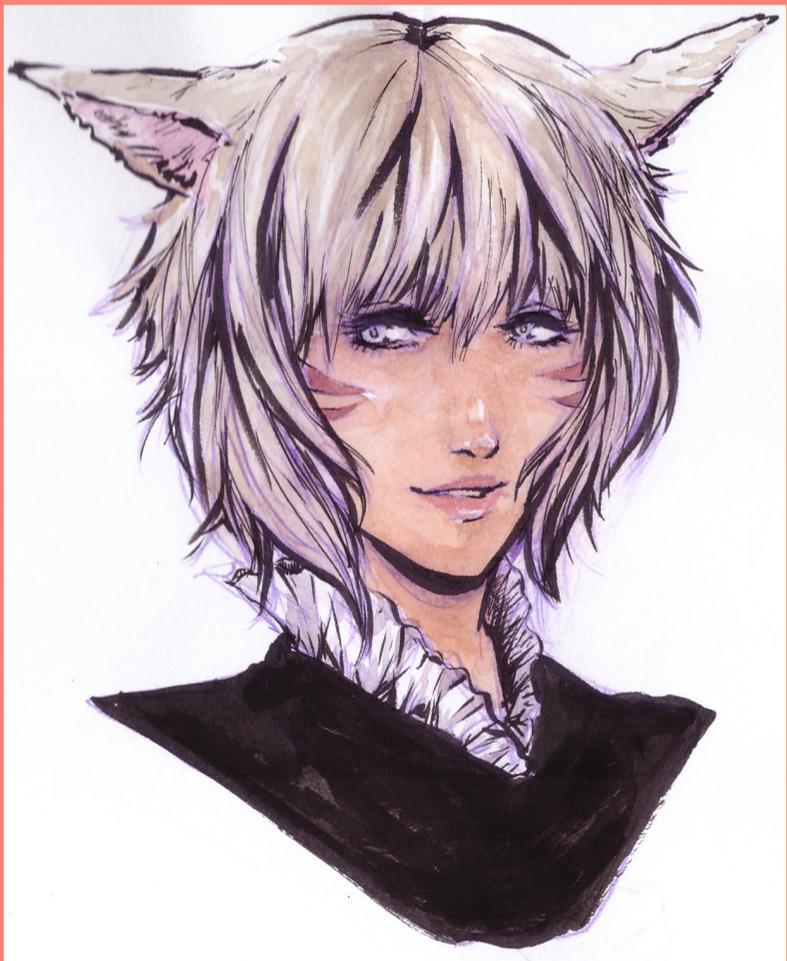
I'm going to say university classes (oops). I used to draw during every single class, you'll always find a doodle somewhere next to the date on my uni notebooks. As for watercolour sketches then that usually happens on the dining table; better than any desk I've ever used! :p

### **What work do you enjoy doing the most? Is there a theme that you pursue?**

I enjoy drawing fanart the most! Mostly characters with unique and attractive design. You'll always find me sketching stuff the day I start a new video game or anime - haha.

### **How long does it take you to draw/sketch something? Describe the process to us.**

I like to start with a rough sketch using a coloured pencil and it takes around 10 minutes, and then I'll start adding up the details using the same pencil and fixing any mistakes or change some elements, and



that takes around 15 minutes. After that, I go ahead and start colouring (usually using watercolours) and it takes a while (ranging between 20 minutes to an entire hour) mostly because I have to wait for each layer to dry, but I don't mind that because it's my favourite step in the process! And finally, after the paint is dry I will start inking, either with an ink brush or some felt tip pens, and this is the step that brings the painting together; the high contrast between the stark black ink and the soft effect that watercolour gives is truly satisfying! After that I would add some final touches like highlight or glow using a white gel pen.

### What are the main challenges that you face as an artist?

Art is all about practice, and I desperately need to work more on that. Anatomy is usually an issue for me that's why I never end up drawing full figured characters, hopefully that will change in the future.

### What is the best piece of advice you've been given?

The best advice I got was from an artist I really admire on Instagram 5 years ago. He said: "You'll improve no matter what, just keep creating! Experiment! You're the only person that can make what you will make." And that really got me working harder and paving my way into finding my own art style; art isn't a talent! Anyone can draw, the only key to improving is tons of practice!

### What is your most important artist tool? Any brands in particular that you stick to?

My pentel pocket brush, easily. I wouldn't mind working with the cheapest pencils, paper and watercolours, but when it comes to inking, I just can't finish my work without it. It's the best pen brush I've ever used and I don't think I'll ever change it.

### You can like and follow Tami here:

 @dracuia

 @haseoo



# RELM'S GALLERY



Final Fantasy by Linnaete

## Drawing Prompts Showcase

Let it be known that all are capable of sketching when politely prompted... Sometimes all it takes is an arranged list of themes for our imaginations to run wild!

During the months of September and October we invited people to grab their sketchbooks for FFF's first Drawing Prompts challenges.

Forum currency rewards were dished out for completing individual challenges (including completing 15 drawings a month, or one per week) and for attaining the group goal of one prompt by at least one person per day.

Anyone could join in the fun, not just artists! We also invited people outside the forum itself to participate and were amazed with the results. All people had to do is submit a drawing related to the appointed themes of the day / week. Some of these themes were suggested by FFF members prior to the start of the challenge.

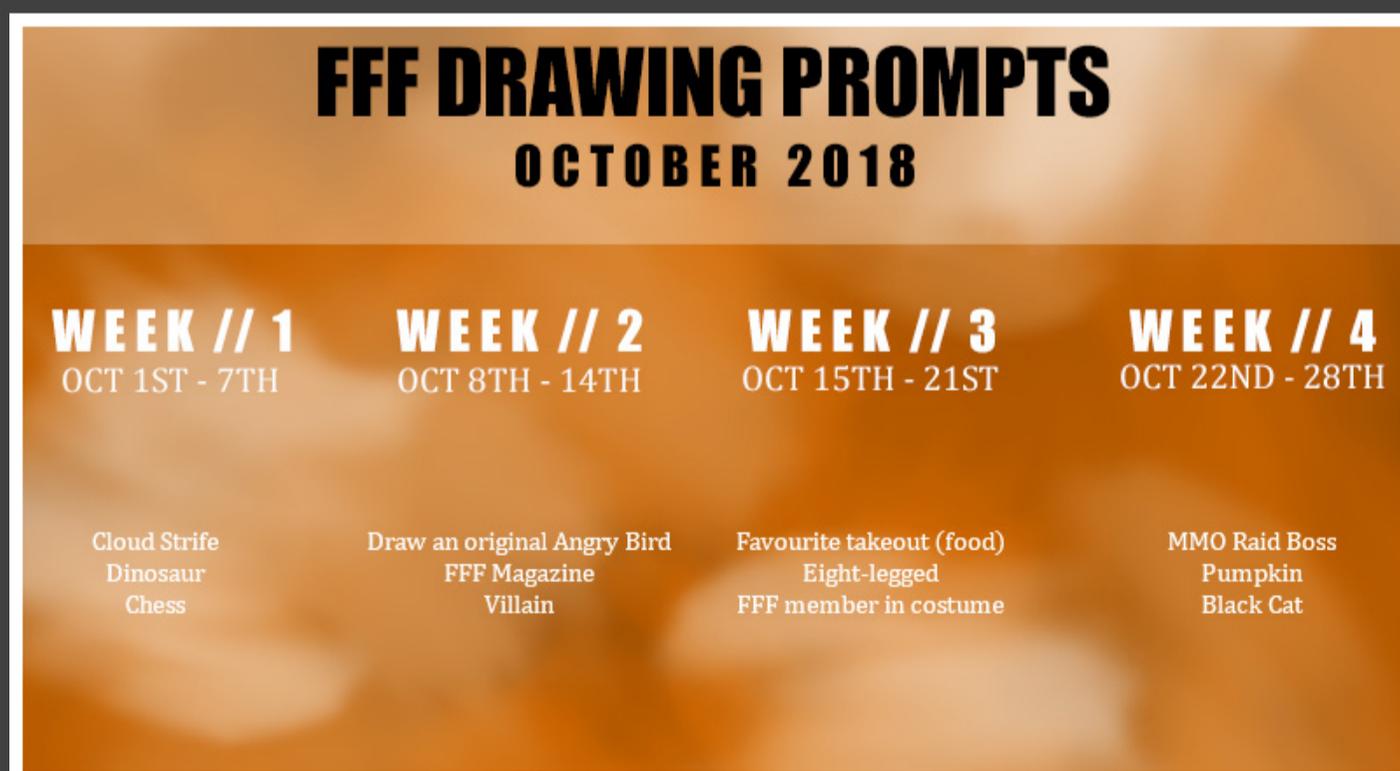
Some of the interpretations of these themes were fairly unorthodox...

We thank everyone for their participation and we fully intend to host more challenges like this!



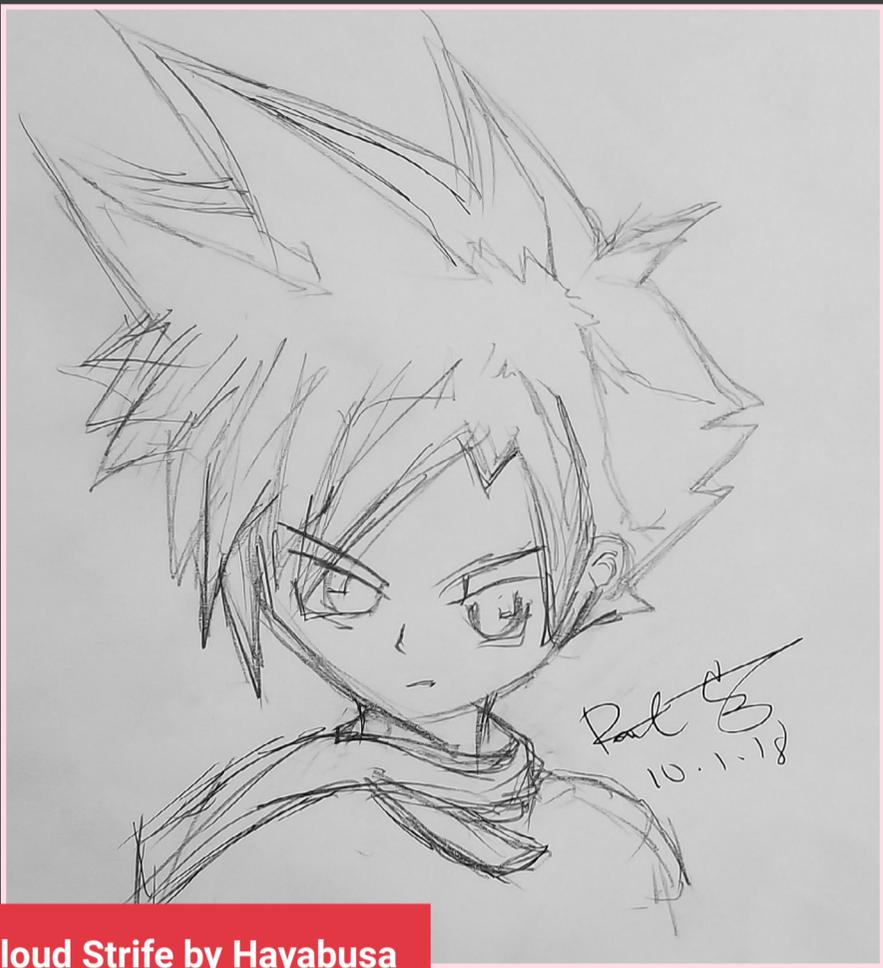
**FFF DRAWING PROMPTS**  
**SEPTEMBER 2018**

1) Final Fantasy	11) Coffee	21) Dog
2) Strawberry	12) Hot Dog	22) Chocobo
3) Eyes	13) Shell	23) Autumn
4) Flowers	14) Mountains	24) Black Mage
5) Cat	15) Wine Bottle	25) Dandelion
6) Hand	16) Windmill	26) Owl
7) Automobile	17) Elf	27) Mushroom
8) FFF Sim	18) Feather	28) Zebra
9) Ear	19) Donut	29) Aquatic Animal
10) Barrel	20) Castle	30) Landscape



**FFF DRAWING PROMPTS**  
**OCTOBER 2018**

<b>WEEK // 1</b> OCT 1ST - 7TH	<b>WEEK // 2</b> OCT 8TH - 14TH	<b>WEEK // 3</b> OCT 15TH - 21ST	<b>WEEK // 4</b> OCT 22ND - 28TH
Cloud Strife Dinosaur Chess	Draw an original Angry Bird FFF Magazine Villain	Favourite takeout (food) Eight-legged FFF member in costume	MMO Raid Boss Pumpkin Black Cat



Cloud Strife by Hayabusa



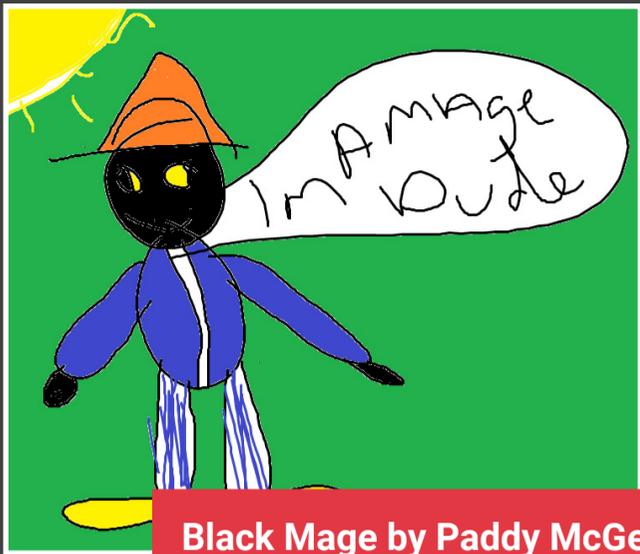
Final Fantasy by Charmy



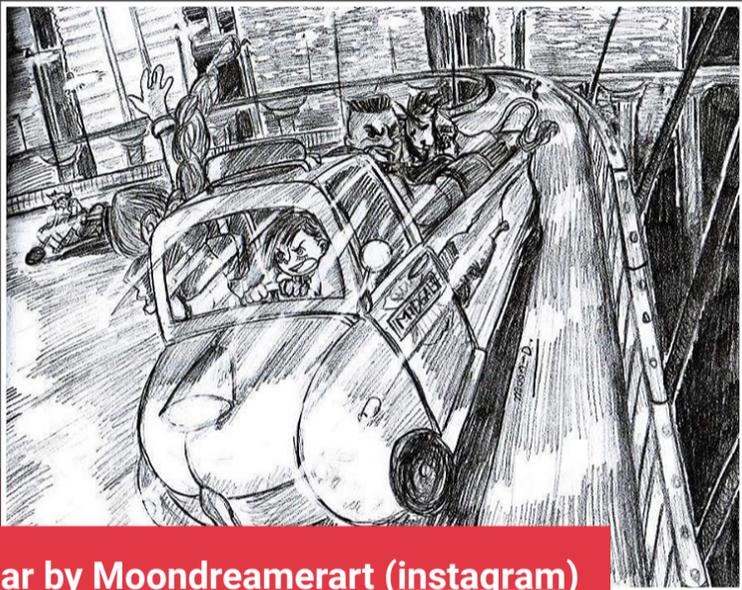
Coffee by Mitsuki



Dog by Linnaete



Black Mage by Paddy McGee

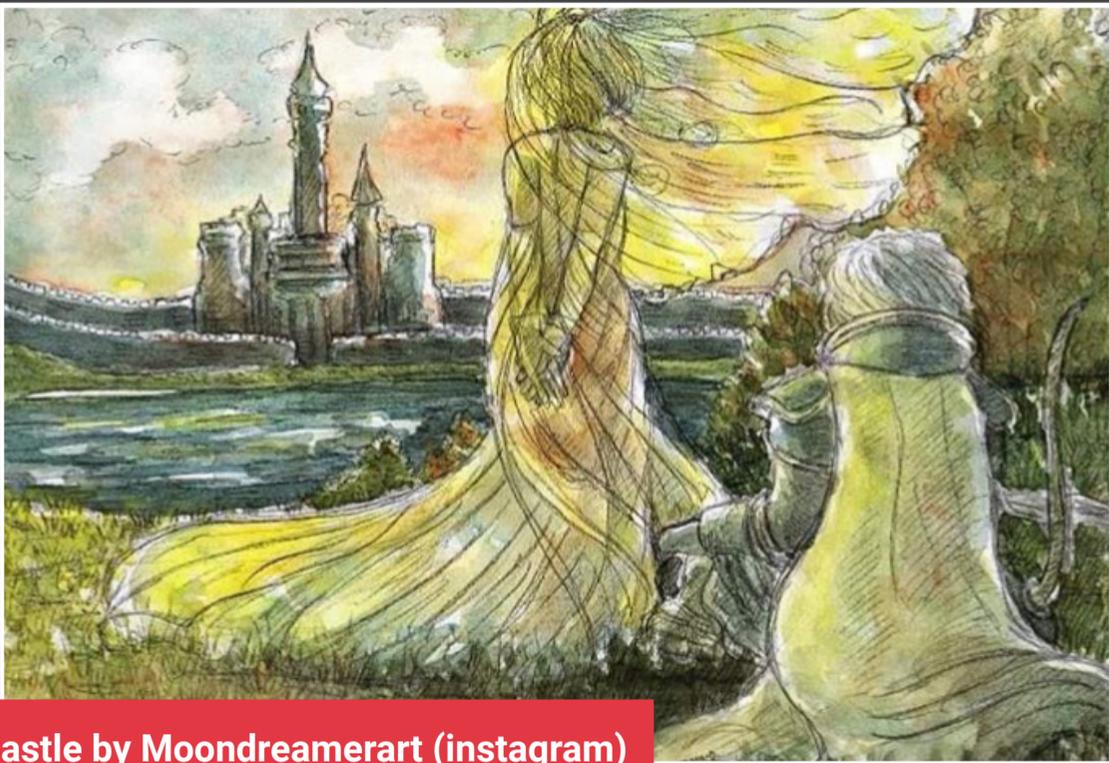


Car by Moondreamerart (instagram)

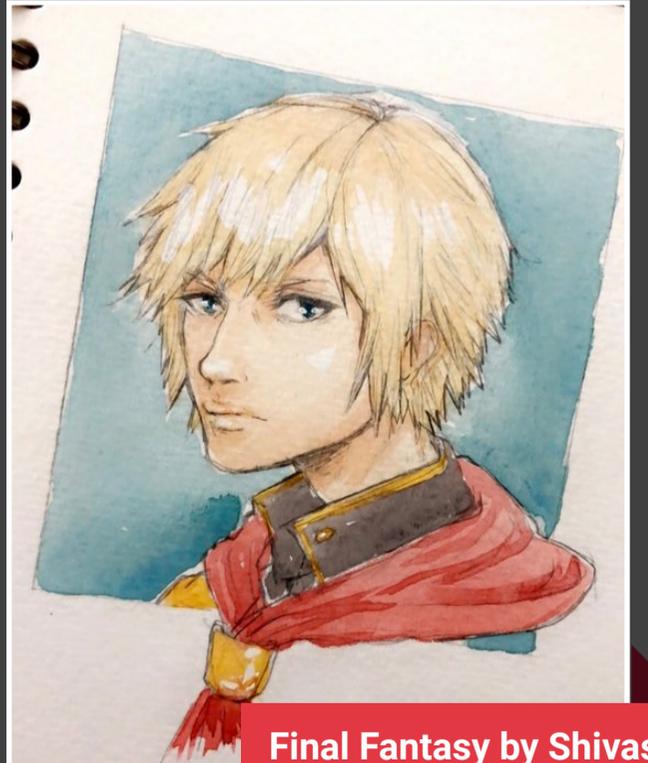


Stripe'y Bird

Original Angry Bird by Six



Castle by Moondreamerart (instagram)



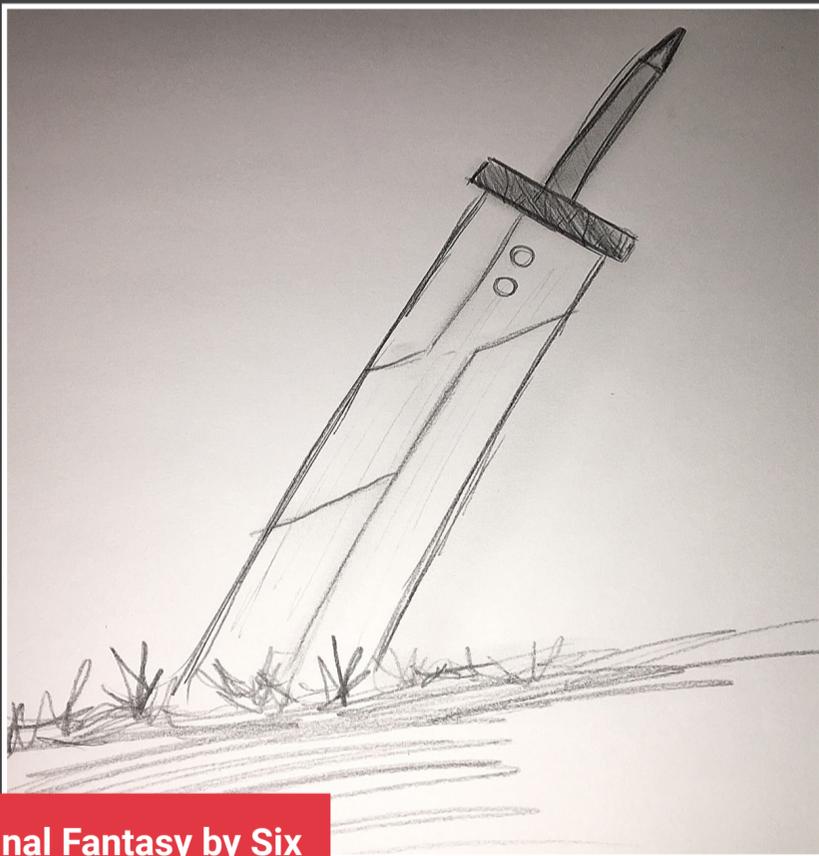
Final Fantasy by Shivas



MMO Raid Boss by Shivas



Hot Dog by Dionysos



Final Fantasy by Six

Want to see the whole portfolio? Take a look!

[FFF Drawing Prompts \(September 2018\)](#)

[FFF Drawing Prompts \(October 2018\)](#)

<http://instagram.com/finalfantasyforums>

[#FFFDrawingPrompts](#)



# Final Fantasy Forums Free Company House Tour

FFF's very own Free Company house is the cherished official home of the forum on *FFXIV*. After much toil, we managed to secure a large house in a rather spectacular area. Our plot of land is located at Plot 15, 12th Ward of Mist on the Lamia server. This location is perfect for being within reach of the sea, offering a refreshing sea breeze and a lovely lighthouse on the cliffside behind. We certainly seized our opportunity to put our own unique stamp on the building. Feel free to check our [Free Company Board](#) on FFF!

**Today we invite you  
in as we give you a  
visual tour!**



## WELCOME



Comfortable stable area for our flashy chocobos.



Low-maintenance garden: pride and joy of our gardener, Sly.



Bonfire nights are the best, especially with lalafells.

# GROUND FLOOR



Our spacious lobby and grand staircase is simultaneously impressive yet welcoming.



Mitsuki's office: contrary to appearances, these bookshelves actually represent only a fraction of her notebook collection.

## MEETING ROOM

When something fishy is going on we need to discuss it.  
GothicSyn: [FC Meetings Video Transcript Archive](#)



# UPPER FLOOR

## CRAFTING STUDIO

This spacious crafting studio is perfect for FFF's own businesses.



Infirmary for our dragons. Thanks, Dr. Kadowaki!

# BOTTOM FLOOR



Julia would be at home here with our basement piano!



Like what you see? We invite you to join us and check out our [FFF FC Lodestone](#)

Stylishly outfitted cafeteria to imitate the style of FFVIII's cafeteria in Balamb Garden.



We have much more space for larger meetings in our basement meeting room. Since we are all of equal worth in FFF, we can all be Knights of the Round Table.



# Galadín

## Inside the mind of a designer

Galadín arrived at the graphic design table relatively late in life at the age of eighteen. Initially on forums, making signature and icon sets for users, she went through her early awkward stage creating mostly Final Fantasy related pieces. After joining FFF in 2013, she became a little more experimental with her designs in response to the GFX related competitions going on at the time. After branching out also into digital illustration, Galadín's approach to design and choice of design elements has diversified, however, she always has a soft spot for creating Final Fantasy themed works when time allows.

Now in her second year of college studying Graphic Design Communication in the Limerick School of Art & Design, Galadín is on the dangerous road of attempting to change her passion into her career. She loves design a 'whole, whole, lot' however, so she's convinced that this is all a good idea – what could possibly go wrong!? At any rate, these days she spends her time tackling college design briefs, learning lens-based media, improving her drawing and design production skills, and when possible, squeezing in time to design layouts for Timber Maniacs. It's all a lot of fun!



Terra GFX signature by Galadín



The Wide-Eyed Fawn by Galadín

### What are your dreams (or goals) which you hope to achieve with graphic design?

Wow, right out of the gate I feel like I'm at a job interview or answering to my mother for my life's choices! To be perfectly candid, I would like to work for a pretty good company like LEGO® or perhaps a music label being all mad creative making album covers for awesome bands. I want to do something that lets me draw as well as design. That would be nifty.

### Design is always changing. How do you stay abreast of the latest design trends?

Ok, my palms are actually sweating right now, this is for real hot seat stuff! But yeah, short answer is I don't know particularly; I don't like to let trends get in the way of a good concept. Mostly the ideas and processes for creating a design is what I let dictate the aesthetic of the final product, which is really fun because it's like this grand reveal moment once you reach that point in your work.

“I want to do something that lets me draw as well as design.”

**You're now part of the Timber Maniacs design team. How do you feel about this and collaborating with writers and other designers?**

This is an easy one, being part of the Timber Maniacs team has been such a good experience for me! I love working with copy type and creating clean designs that feed into the design sensibility the three of us designers have created. Collaboration is something I'm pretty used to doing now as a designer-in-training; what I find particularly good with the Timber Maniacs team is definitely the communication and dedication that's there – oh, and the understanding, that's always appreciated!

**Do you have one particular piece of work that stands out to you the most? Tell us about it.**

So a slight bit of an admission here but I get bored of my work once I'm finished creating it; it all just merges in my mind like a great big mush of ennui. I don't get that excited when I look over my work because I'm too preoccupied with what's next, or the piece I'm working on in that moment in time. If I was to identify work I enjoyed doing outside of college, it would be the banners I created for FFF. Some of those were actually kind of cool, particularly the ones I did in 2017 (I think?) which had this stereotypical theme of dark and broody for the male FF characters, and pastels and pinks for the ladies – sorry not sorry, it really did suit the franchise's aesthetics, don't blame me!

**What type of work do you enjoy doing the most? (E.g. logo work, signatures, banners, etc).**

Anything that gives me the chance to draw. Recently I had a brief in college to design a booklet for a short film which was awesome since it ended up giving me so much scope to not only create something appropriate for the project but to also express myself as a designer. To put a long story short there was watercolour for days and I was happy!

**What's your creative process like? Any major steps you'd like to share with us?**

It's actually quite a rigid process. Basically it's: research, basic concept phase, conceptual LEGO part, concept development, rough draft, variation mock-ups and then the final piece. When working on something like the Timber Maniacs project, most of these phases are completed quite quickly and are moved along while working digitally, but mostly when I'm working on something that is either self-initiated or for college, I will do a lot of this part on paper as it's a more effective way of documenting and perhaps collecting and/or creating ideas for future reference.

**How do you get yourself out of a creative rut?**

This will sound dangerously arrogant, but mostly I don't get into a creative rut. Not because I'm some sort of masterful genius but quite the opposite. It's mostly due to the fact that I am fascinated with using subjects that



Blood Red Sky Blue by Galadín

others consider to be mundane (and rightly so I wager). I like to create new concepts and designs with something that might be considered old fashioned, like florals or something inspired by the Art Nouveau style or even French Rococo; or perhaps, if I'm feeling fancy, I might delve into folklore or fairy tales. It depends on the project really. By the very nature of looking to the past though, you never run out of material to feed your creative flow. So there's that and the fact that if I run into a dead-end when working on a project, I'm convinced I can worry my way through it.

**Do you have any role models or particular sources of inspiration?**

I get really inspired by people who work a lot! Their stories and perseverance helps me stay focused when I run low on energy or if I have to pull a late night or wake up early to get work done. This may sound odd but people like Davey Havoc (this guy never stops, I swear he works in his dreams!), HappyDArtist and even the likes of BTS who work so goddamn hard, like, all the time, make me realise that yeah, I can give it an extra push too!

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Check out her [Instagram](#) and [Gallery](#).

# Vana'diel: A World of Adventure

BY SOULCORRUPTOR

Do you want to know what Final Fantasy's first MMORPG is like? Well look no further than into the world of Vana'diel. Step into the boots of an adventurer and set out on a journey that will take you all over the world as you find yourself involved in a struggle with a resurging evil.

You inhabit a world shaped by gods. After the goddess Altana wept over the decline of Vana'diel, the five enlightened races (Humes, Galkas, Elvaan, Tarutarus and Mithras) formed from her tears. To keep these races from ever rising above their station, the god Promathia cursed them with endless conflict and created beast tribes to ensure they are endlessly at war. The Crystal War (which happened twenty years before the beginning of the core game) was the most extreme of these conflicts as the mysterious Shadow Lord forged an alliance of advanced, organised beastmen who devastated the realm until the five races put aside their differences and formed the Allied Forces of Altana.

Together they defeated the Beastman Confederate and vowed

to maintain their peace in post-war times. But the beastmen have been regrouping... The Allied Forces need adventurers to keep evil at bay. This is where you come in!

As you pick your starting nation (Bastok, San d'Oria or Windurst) you will slowly find yourself solving slightly small problems that are besieging your nation. Which, depending on your home state, could range from: solving problems in a mine, trying to find why magic is being drained to a tower, appeasing a beast nation to maintain a peace treaty. All three localised tasks lead up to the major problem: the awakening of the dreaded Shadow Lord.

There are many jobs for you to choose from, starting with the basic Warrior or Black Mage and ranging to the devastating Ninja or mixed utility Dancer. Adventuring doesn't sound up to your forte? Then how about traveling the cities and picking up crafting as a hobby? From cooking to leather crafting, metal working to bone crafting, there is sure to be a craft to meet your taste.

Art by Amano.

Once you save the world from a resurrected ancient evil, what is there left to do? How about the struggle between two ancient civilizations that were plunged into an embattled war between the gods? Step into the scenario of the *Chains of Promathia* and begin to unravel the mysteries of the past and the will of the gods. Alternatively, you can step into the lands of the Far East, after a secluded nation finally opens its borders to travellers once again, many of them finding themselves enlisting their services as mercenaries. Seek fame and fortune in the lands of Aht Urhgan and delve into the secrets of an ancient empire.

Last but not least, do you perhaps wish to learn of the great war that started to plunge Vana'diel into darkness? Then look no further than *Wings of the Goddess*; as strange stone monoliths spring up across the land, a mysterious power awakens in these maws and you find yourself transported to the past of the Crystal War itself. Step into the time of turmoil when the Shadow Lord was gathering his allies and trying to subdue all of Vana'diel under his rule.

Now for the largest difference between this and the familiar *FFXIV* most today may know: the battle and job system. Unlike the hotbar system of *FFXIV*, you have in *FFXI* a more traditional menu based system (which also allows you to establish custom macros with your ctrl, alt + number pad keys so that you can quickly access certain commands; for example ctrl

5 might be mapped to your Cure III). Also, in contrast to *FFXIV*, this system relies more on actual physical attacks for your melee jobs, rather than a wide set of extra skills. Instead you use skills to enhance your role: a Warrior has a job ability of Provoke to draw enemies' enmity towards him. While attacking, you build up TP (Tactical Points) to unleash your weapon skills across the myriad jobs you have. Each weapon has its own individual set of skills. Mage jobs, such as the Black Mage, have access to a whole field of elemental spells instead of just three types.

Another difference is your job, unlike *FFXIV*'s system where you can change job on-the-fly by changing your weapon, in *FFXI* you're tied to the job and can only equip the weapons that they are allowed to use. *FFXI* makes full use of your job's abilities, and anytime you visit a friendly moogle at your Mog House you can have them change your job for you so long as you get it unlocked. You start with six basic jobs - the Warrior, Thief, Monk, Black Mage, Red Mage, and White Mage. Once you hit Level 30 in one of these six basic jobs you can do quests to unlock any of the other multitude of jobs. Perhaps the most interesting difference also comes at Level 18, when you can do a quest to unlock your subjob. This subjob allows you to use the abilities of another job you levelled at half the level of your main job. For example, say you have a Level 20 Warrior and a Level 15 Thief your level set up would look as such: Level 20 Warrior / Level 10 Thief.





The game's varied locations and soundtrack really complement each other in imbuing the world of Vana'diel with its unique spirit. The different nations each have their own character and quirks, assorted surrounding environments and artistic styles, and there is a greater emphasis on physical journeying in *FFXI* rather than warping. If you fancy chilling, head over to Bibiki Bay to board the Manacripper fishing barge for unforgettable sightseeing tours (the drop-off trip to Purgonorgo Isle is particularly compelling). While on the boat ride, the music (suitably named *Currents of Time*, composed by Naoshi Mizuta) is mostly peaceful and relaxing. Naoshi uses tones and sounds that makes you think of a port side town – a perfect companion as you embark on your tranquil cruise. Admire the allure of the azure ocean, white rock formations, hypnotic whirlpools, leaping schools of dolphins and tropical vegetation from the Manacripper's deck. However, even the best cruises can have complications. On one of my own trips, when loading onto Purgonorgo Isle, it looked like my boat was sinking! Just like *Pirates of the Caribbean's* Captain Jack Sparrow, I know how to arrive in style!

With all this now I hope you can enjoy a journey into the world of Vana'diel yourself. We hope to see you there!

LP

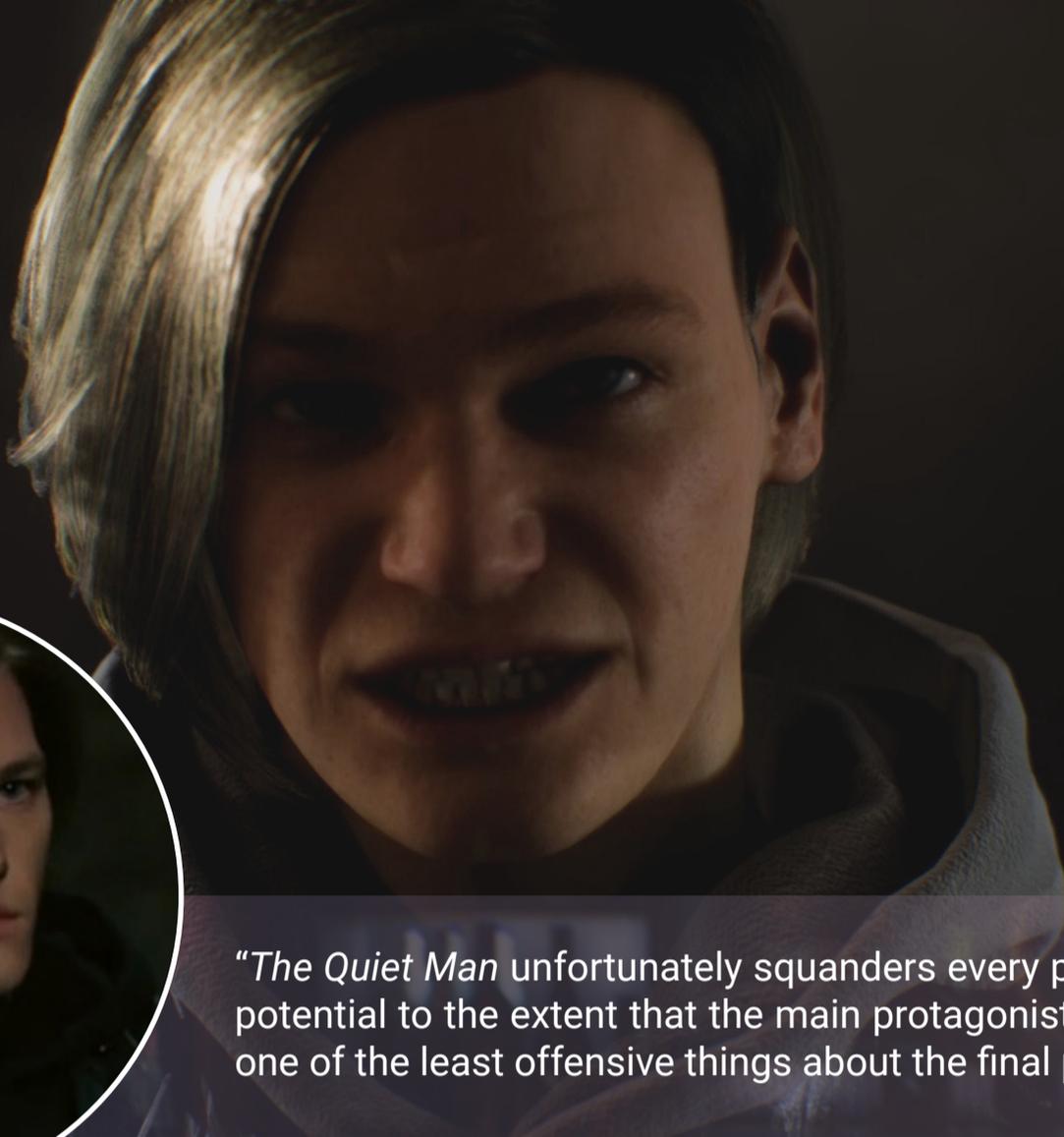
## THE QUIET MAN SHOULD PROBABLY NEITHER BE SEEN NOR HEARD

Very rarely do you come across a video game of which its very existence leaves you veritably confounded. You stop to ask yourself a multitude of rhetorical questions: *why* does this exist? *What* were they thinking? *How* was this greenlit and approved for release? In the case of *The Quiet Man*, who in Square Enix thought this was a product worthy of a full commercial release?

When the game was originally unveiled in E3 2018 during Square Enix's own streamed show, this curious new project was steeped with fascinating potential. For one, this was an opportunity for the deaf community to be positively represented in a video game. The games industry is so inundated with able-bodied heroes that the sight of a deaf playable protagonist in a game that was purportedly themed and centred on his disability was a genuinely exciting prospect.

Imagine how having this disability can translate into a unique gaming experience. Players would have to rely only on visual cues and perhaps the usage of live-action FMV cutscenes can be a significant boon for a deaf audience able to read lips. The challenge would be to discover out-of-the-box methods to outsmart enemies who have the advantage of communicating verbally. Picture also how deafness as a central feature can impact storytelling. Information would have to be communicated to both the protagonist and the player in relatively unconventional ways, which while challenging to accomplish, could be very effectively done by a skilled and innovative writing and directing team.

*The Quiet Man* unfortunately squanders every promising drop of potential to the extent that the main protagonist's hair is actually one of the *least* offensive things about the final product.



*"The Quiet Man* unfortunately squanders every promising drop of potential to the extent that the main protagonist's hair is actually one of the least offensive things about the final product."

As far as controls are concerned, *The Quiet Man* is rather standardised. It follows a formula established by brawler games that have come before: light attack, heavy attack, grab and dodge. In addition to these Dane (the protagonist) has access to two other features: a sprint ability (for the very odd running sections in the game; it's rather unnecessary) and the "Unique Selling Point": Focus Mode. Focus Mode moves the camera to an over the shoulder view and allows Dane to execute an instant-down heavy attack.

While these all sound rather average, the execution is certainly below par. While the attack functionalities work fine (in so far as they do their job without looking completely ridiculous), the dodge functionality doesn't work as intended very often. In many cases, Dane dodges more attacks by just walking away from an enemy. This would be fine if the game allowed you to avoid using the dodge ability, but - as we will explore later - a major portion of the game relies on countering which can only be done from dodging.

*The Quiet Man* opts for a different style of tutorial which is both extremely literal, and extremely vague, all at the same time! On the pause screen neon silhouettes of Dane display. When a corresponding button is pressed the Dane-Silhouette replicates the move which is mapped to that button. However, as interesting as this initially sounds, Dane moves rather differently compared to the neon replica. The fighting abilities all sort of clash together and look like Dane is punching an enemy.



Bizarre, intrusive live-action overlays intermittently flash during gameplay in a stunningly amateurish attempt to convey artistry and poignancy, albeit with next to no subtlety or grace involved. Almost every overlay sequence involves a pianist who has captured Dane's heart - and who also looks exactly like his deceased mother.

Focus Mode is never adequately explained. The tutorial explanation is just Dane standing still, a representation that is nowhere close to what the ability entails. Though it's understandable that the game wouldn't lead you to an answer directly - as part of the meaning the game is to replicate what a deaf person would deal with - unashamedly just not explaining what something does is rather flawed. It took me to the middle of the game to figure out what Focus Mode allowed the player to do.

The animations in the game leave much to be desired. There are plenty of core animations missing from the fighting gameplay. For example, Dane cannot transition from one enemy to another a lot of the time so what **should** be a smooth sidestep usually ends up resembling the mystical art of teleporting. Other animations, such as grabbing the opponent or when Dane is knocked down, are done to such a poor standard that it's rather hilarious to watch.

The enemy animations don't fare much better; knocking down an enemy can merge them into walls or doors. The entrances that enemies should enter through simply don't open; they simply phase through. Some enemies have machetes that materialise out of thin air. In addition, the enemies themselves- up until the final 20% of the game- are copies of the same three men in the opening scene.

Also, in some of the fight gameplay sections in the game, upon landing a heavy hit to an enemy it overlays a photo from the previous cutscene. Maybe this was done to emphasise Dane's emotional state during the fight, but the feature serves more as a distraction (some of the screenshots can be so bright as to block out what the player can see) than anything else.

To break up the monotony of beating minorities (seriously, the enemies are primarily Latinos) to a pulp, *The Quiet Man* implements several boss fights. Most of these boss fights require the usage of the (God awful) dodge ability and one boss makes it the sole method to inflict damage on the opponent. In the case of this boss fight, I eventually resorted to just moving out of the way. It really broke any

sort of illusion of a fluid fight engine. For a genre that uses the boss fight to its utmost potential, *The Quiet Man* completely flops in this regard.

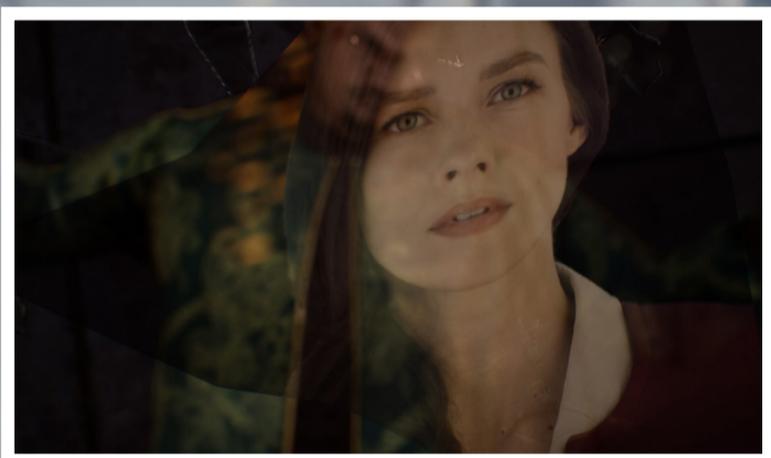
Presumably in the game's initial pitch to Square Enix, the idea was for the player to be immersed enough in the relative silence that they can comfortably place themselves into the shoes of Dane, our protagonist. There should always be a consistent parallel between what both Dane and the player can and cannot sense. The player ideally experiences the game vicariously through him, meaning everything that is obfuscated from Dane should *equally* be as obfuscated from the player. *The Quiet Man* ignores this entirely and simply reduces the audio design to either dead silence or heavily muffled sounds during gameplay combat sequences or certain cutscenes.

In fact, the game's very name is somewhat of a misnomer. In conversations depicted using both FMVs and occasionally as clumsy in-game rendered cutscenes, Dane seems to have little to no trouble maintaining lengthy, casual chats with acquaintances. On one occasion even, the person whom he is talking to briefly has his back turned! Our man may not have learnt how to sort out his haircut, but his ability to accurately read lips without breaking the momentum of a full conversation is impressive. The player can only sit there bewildered, staring at a few characters engaged in a conversation they cannot hear and unaided by any subtitles. It is like a stalker peering down on the street level from the 32nd floor with a pair of binoculars to watch a small gathering party have a chinwag while they await their taxi.





As a result the game's story is confounding nonsense precisely because by choice the developers deliberately leave the player in the dark. Dane has a firm grasp of context and what is happening. The player shares no such luxury, because there are no subtitles and their TV screen is essentially on mute. Perhaps more baffling even is what occurs at the very start of the game when Dane confronts the Hispanic druggies in an alleyway. The druggies audibly – through actual spoken dialogue, albeit acted terribly – tell Dane to beat it. It is one of the only occasions in the game when you can hear anything remotely comprehensible and the fact these very few moments exist is a sign that *The Quiet Man* doesn't care about consistent design. It just does whatever it wants. It also goes so far as to pepper various scenes with jarring, intrusive flashbacks and images overlaid on top of the action in a frantic attempt to present an artsy veneer. This is all to dress up an incomprehensible game story that as far as we can determine, is about a deaf young man with an Oedipus complex who is presumably in love with – and wishes to rescue and protect – a pianist who completely resembles his deceased mother. They literally hired the same actress to play both roles. This is high art.



As of writing, a patch to add in voices had yet to be released, so the story by now should hopefully be actually comprehensible – for what it is worth. The fact there will even be a patch for voices at all is a colossal testament to this game's utter failure to even remotely deliver one iota of the initial concept's wealth of promises. The very name *The Quiet Man* is rendered so meaningless you may as well just watch the film of this game's namesake. The film mercifully has nothing to do with this game.

*The Quiet Man* is not only one of the worst additions ever to Square Enix's portfolio, but one of the worst video games ever released. How this game was even conceived, made and released is one of the greatest mysteries of our time.

“The very name *The Quiet Man* is rendered so meaningless you may as well just watch the film of this game's namesake.”





After we'd reviewed and streamed *The Quiet Man* - which you can [watch here](#) (watch out that the stream is NSFW and includes swearing) - Square Enix decided to release a patch to the game that allows you to play the game with audio. Below is a summary of the story, after we were finally able to understand it!

So, Dane is our protagonist. Dane doesn't have many interesting features; he's the rather average white twenty-something who frowns a lot and has a grudge- a time-honoured traditional main character archetype! What does make Dane different is that he has a wickedly bad haircut (honestly he should sue the barber) and he is, in fact, deaf.

Anyway, we follow Dane throughout *The Quiet Man* as he spends the night trying to track down a masked man who has taken something - or someone - from him. Navigating the city of New York with only his deafness, bad haircut and mysterious kung-fu skills to help him on his way Dane finds himself not only confronting the masked man, but also some childhood trauma and unresolved questions! Spliced in-between are flashbacks to Dane's childhood and relationship with his mother and what set him down the path of looking grunge and cracking (primarily Hispanic, for some reason) skulls.

While this sounds relatively standard and good-enough-for-a-game, the execution is, for lack of a better phrase, utterly appalling. Inconsistencies with what Dane can or can't do with his hearing. Major actions - like murder - happen over the silliest reasons, characters justify their actions with nonsense and (during the FMV scenes) over-act to a level not unlike *"The Room"* (for which this game is, for all intents and purposes, a video game equivalent).

Combine that with one dimensional character tropes (Hispanic gangster, black gangster, old chubby cop and a mother-cum-love interest female lead) a - rather strange - Deus Ex Machina towards the end of the game and threadbare narrative that feels like something a fifteen-year-old hobbyist could write in a week.

Due to these weaknesses, some of the more serious scenes are rather hilarious to watch; one of the flashback scenes is easily the worst representation of a struggle I've ever seen in my life. In a nutshell: Tay and Isaac (the two gangster characters) are fighting over the worst pair of shoes known to man. Dane decides that running up to a couple of men currently fighting over a gun, waving at them and saying "Hello!" is a great idea- all while Dane's mother simply WATCHES. It's honestly one of the most moronic scenes I've ever watched in any sort of media. This level of quality appeared throughout my playthrough so frequently that I began wondering who got shafted the worst; the actors who had to work in this game or the directors who had to deal with some of the worst actors I've ever seen in a video game, movie, TV series or amateur theatre.

Between this and the shoddy gameplay, it thoroughly feels like nobody cared or wanted to work on *The Quiet Man* - there are just too many gaps in the story and bugs in the gameplay. The idea that this game could work as a silent representation of a game sounds completely bonkers when you realise; WITH audio, the game is atrocious enough.

Overall, we would recommend *The Quiet Man* if you're interested in getting drunk and roasting a video game for fun. For purposes other than that, you should probably give it a miss.



## A visual novel experience to eclipse others!

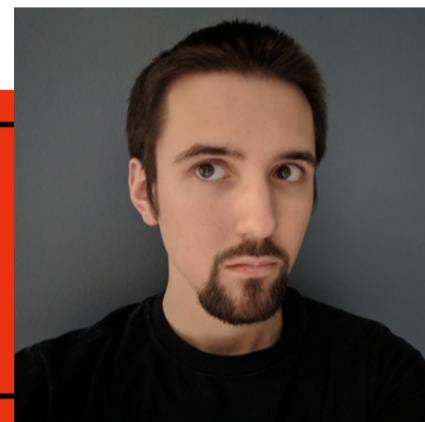
What if there was a cosmic conflict between the Earth's two most vital celestial bodies: the Sun and Moon? Can you imagine the real world ramifications if the scales were tipped to favour one above the other? XGASOFT's game will show you how there may be more to these spheres in the sky than meets the eye.

Luke Chasteen (known as AuronX on Final Fantasy Forums) is the author and developer of the upcoming video game *Yugure no Kagami* and the VNGen visual novel engine it runs on. Together with co-creator Sean (.Mosh on Final Fantasy Forums), Luke has toiled astronomically on this project for four years.

*Yugure no Kagami* is a JRPG-inspired urban-fantasy interactive adventure game set to feature a compelling plot, a social progression system, and over 30 hours of engaging content. It makes full use of Luke's own visual novel engine, VNGen, through which he seeks to reimagine the visual novel experience for both users and developers. This ambitious project developed by XGASOFT (Luke's game development studio) has grown significantly over the years. The overall project has now been shaped into different chapters exploring varied aspects of the mythology surrounding the core game *Yugure no Kagami – The Mirror of Dusk*.

The first chapter in the saga, the upcoming *Yugure no Kagami ZERO*, is to be a shorter prequel to the core game and is due to release **this winter!** This forthcoming interactive visual novel will itself contain two short stories, *DAYBREAK* and *NIGHTFALL*, acting as an alluring prelude to the main story. *Yugure no Kagami ZERO* offers you your first chance to test out the new VNGen engine. You can treat *ZERO* as a public demo to whet your appetite for the main game, to see how things work, but also to enjoy the chapter in its own right.

Luke casts some exclusive information our way and reflects on the game...



## What interested you in programming and what is your background?

It was really a case of "right place, right time". I have no formal programming education, but I grew up at the tail-end of the command-line era right as technology was rapidly advancing to become what it is today. Getting to experience both ends of that spectrum was really exciting to me and I've always had an interest in writing my own programs and exploring what's possible. Not that I'll ever hit the limit of modern technology. Where'd be the fun in that? It's the constant process of hitting my own limit and figuring out how to make the code produce the result I want that I find addicting. Programming really is an addiction of sorts.

For me, the seminal moment was when I discovered a program called GameMaker. At the time, it was written by one guy and only ran on Windows, but these days it's a full-blown development environment that exports to just about anything. (Seeing my code running on a PS4 for the first time was quite a trip!) GameMaker's programming language, GML, was the first language that really "clicked" with me, and I've been partial to it ever since. Every language has its pros and cons, but there's something about GML that's just really comfortable to work with. Whenever I use other languages I find myself wishing they were a bit more like it.



## What inspired you to create *Yugure no Kagami*?

That would be Sean, aka .Mosh on the Final Fantasy Forums. I'm still not sure what he saw in me when we first met, but he was determined we'd be great friends from the start and it turns out he was totally right. For a couple of years we binged anime and videogames together—and believe me, I know how that sounds, but it was time well-spent. There's a lot of depth to stories in these mediums if you know where to look for it. That's exactly what we did, and it left deep impressions on us both.

Then one evening Sean came to me and said, "Hey, wouldn't it be nice if we created something like these things that have inspired us so much?" I told him no way, it'd be way too big an undertaking. Well, I like to say all great ideas are thought up by mistake or in the shower, and later that night, while I was in the shower I got hit by an idea that was the perfect blend of all the stories that inspired us plus enough originality to stand on its own. I brought the idea to him the next day, and *Yugure no Kagami* was born.

## How big is your team?

It varies! The thing nobody sees with any multimedia project is how roles come and go throughout production.

Initially it was just Sean and me handling script, then Vincenzo and Charles came on to produce our OST while Reef and Satya tackled our initial character artwork. Now that those roles are complete, I'm flying solo doing all the final programming and assembly myself.

## What can you reveal about the plot at this stage?

What if you could trade places with your reflection in the mirror? What if doing so allowed you to see the people for who they truly are, reflected in their very appearance? What would they look like? What about yourself?

This is the power our characters are faced with. *Yugure no Kagami* is set in modern-day Japan, but with a twist: behind the scenes, the universe is governed by invisible guardians representing the sun and the moon—eternal opposites that keep our world in balance. But due to an event that happened centuries ago, that balance has been broken, and each side is on a race to obtain a certain power hidden in the human realm that will guarantee their victory in the war.

On the day of a solar eclipse, a chance encounter with one of these guardians casts a group of average university students right into the heart of this conflict. But each must face the conflict in their own hearts if they want to learn the truth about the world... and choose which side they believe will best restore balance before it's too late.

## Are there features for this game which mark it out as unique?

*Yugure no Kagami* is a visual novel, but it's being made in an original game engine called VNgen, which is designed to take visual novels to the next level. With VNgen we're able to pull off animations and integrate game mechanics that normally would require a bigger budget and team to achieve.

Since it's our first release, the "game" side of it is fairly conservative—you won't be mashing buttons, let's just say. But as this is a very personal story, we're handling player agency in some interesting ways. On top of the usual dialog choices you might expect in visual novels, you'll also get to choose certain places to go and people to see. It's a much more natural way of building in-game relationships. I think people will be surprised by how dynamic it is. You'd have to play through several times to experience everything, and it's not just about unlocking different endings. But I'll say no more!

## Have your initial ideas for the project altered much since its initial conception?

It's actually remarkable how little we came up with that didn't make it into the final product in some form or another. Sean had this really cool strategy battle system he came up with that unfortunately didn't make the cut, but I'm pretty sure every single idea we had for the story made it in. Our original brainstorm document was like this treasure trove that saved us repeatedly whenever we'd hit a dead-end in developing the plot. Sometimes it was a little mind-blowing how something we'd written months or years ago would fit so perfectly into the narrative that had built up since then. Letting it develop organically like that really added a lot of layers of depth that otherwise might not have been there!

One big change I can name though is how the game got split into two parts. The first part, *Yugure no Kagami ZERO*, acts as a prequel and also answers some questions players might have after finishing the main plot. It's comprised of backstory we had already developed internally, but turning it into a standalone visual novel of its own wasn't planned at all! Still, I think the whole experience will really benefit from it. Look forward to that releasing this Winter!

**FFF is very excited to play this game emanating from the minds of two highly regarded members of the forums.**

**We hope you are too!**

DAYBREAK

**Discover more about *Yugure no Kagami***

<https://www.xgasoft.com/>

<https://www.xgasoft.com/ynkgame/>

NIGHTFALL

OPTIONS

EXTRAS





# CHRISTMAS EVENTS

Do you enter into the Christmas spirit?

Are you full of good cheer? Or are you a Scrooge?

At Final Fantasy Forums we aspire to reward the former and hearten the latter through our popular annual Christmas competitions! FFF members cosy up to participate in a variety of activities; there is always something for anybody who wants to be involved. All without the need of any elf helpers, or any special talents or specialist knowledge in order to enjoy most of these!

By participating in events members earn forum currency (Gil, Community Tokens, and Gold Points) with which they can purchase items in our digital store, the MogShop. The overall winner of Christmas also gets extra prizes – a neat stocking filler, if you will!

## Events from FFF Christmases past have included:

**Candy Canes:** share the love by handing out candy canes to friends or respected people on the forum.

**White Elephant:** when called to pick a box, decide whether you select a box to open (containing an unknown item - some good, some bad - including forced parody usernames as booby prizes) or steal someone else's.

**Secret Santa:** write a message to an assigned member and try to fulfil their gift request.

**Christmas Jokes:** an opportunity to create the ultimate cracker of a joke (or ones so cringe-inducing that they become entertaining). This event allows FFF to make people laugh like Tidus!

**Guessing games:** for example, guess how many M&Ms are in the jar.

**Christmas Crosswords:** complete the crossword for easy gifts.

**Scavenger Hunt (2016):** take photographs of listed items and post the image files.

**Santa's List - Naughty & Nice (2016):** people could fill out forms to put FFF members on 'naughty' or 'nice' lists... Some of them were quite entertaining!

**P.O.S.T. (Promote On-site Threads):** competitive posting to score points.

**FFXIV Yuletide Contest / Fur & Cold:** FFF members' FFXIV character costume competitions, voted for by forum members.

**FF Soundtrack Contest (2017):** Name the tune and the game of Christmassy or festive-esque FF themes.

**Rudolph's RaFFFles:** using FFF's raffle system for a Christmas raffle – a chance to win currency, usernames, colours and more.

**Continue the Christmas Poem:** FFF members collaboratively construct an original Christmas poem by posting a new line per post. These don't always make logical sense, but capture the forum's merry quirks...

**Moogle Merrymaking (2014):** doodle-based game where Mogrinch and Toby the Tree had their debut in this tree decoration gambling game (see the Mogrinch article in this issue).

**Cegling events (using FFF's original little creatures):**

**Snowball Elimination (2017):** hurt and heal game set during a brutal snowball fight where FFF members fought to kill off ceglings and save the ceglings they wished to live.

**Snowman Sculpt (2017):** FFF members used the ceglings to build and design original snowmen (and snow-women) using scattered props strewn about a snowy plain.

\*\*\*\*\*

We've certainly done a lot to reflect upon, and we still have a sack brimming with ideas!

## If you have any ideas for a future Christmas event do contact us!

Email: [ffforumsdotnet@gmail.com](mailto:ffforumsdotnet@gmail.com)  
[www.finalfantasyforums.net](http://www.finalfantasyforums.net)



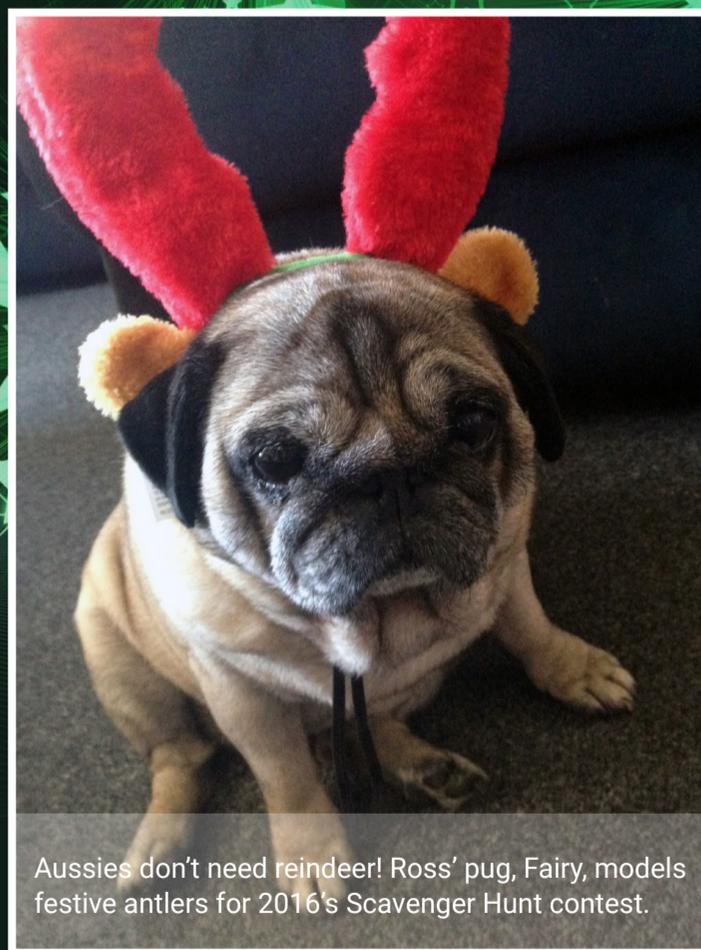
[www.twitter.com/FFForums](https://www.twitter.com/FFForums)



[www.facebook.com/FFForums](https://www.facebook.com/FFForums)



[www.instagram.com/finalfantasyforums](https://www.instagram.com/finalfantasyforums)



Aussies don't need reindeer! Ross' pug, Fairy, models festive antlers for 2016's Scavenger Hunt contest.

“Doctor, Doctor! I’m paranoid that moogles are after me!”

“You must be nuts.”

**(Dionysos, 2016)**

\*\*\*\*\*

What does Bartz wrap his Christmas presents with?

With a chocobow.

**(Dionysos, 2017)**

\*\*\*\*\*

An exasperated Quistis Trepe led Balamb Garden’s new headmaster to the Training Centre. She told him that this was a den housing real monsters, so she would heavily advise him not to enter.

“There is no one more leveled up than I am, believe me!” declared the headmaster, a certain DJ Trump, before he proceeded to haughtily waltz in.

.....

Fifteen minutes later, Dr Kadowaki had hurried to the scene. “What happened? I heard Headmaster Trump had a dramatic encounter with a T-Rexaur!”

“Indeed. I was very startled and frightened by the sight of that big scary head and those tiny little flailing hands...”

...said the T-Rexaur.

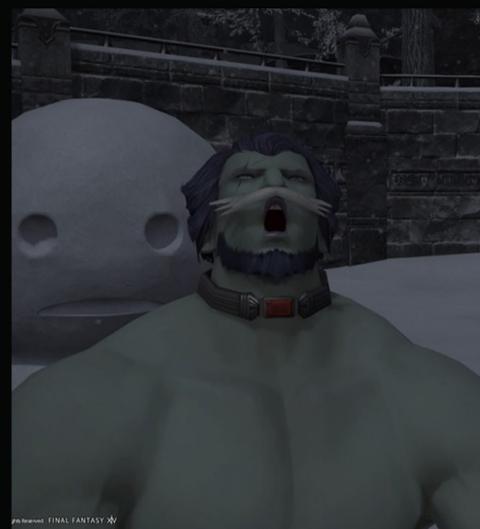
**(Linnaete, 2017)**

\*\*\*\*\*

There was once a pom-pous Moogle who studied the stars. He discovered that the planet revolves around its star and that everything in the world revolves around Kupo Nuts. His name? Kuponicus.

**(Linnaete, 2016)**

## WINNER OF FFXIV SCREENSHOT CONTEST: FUR & COLD, 2017.

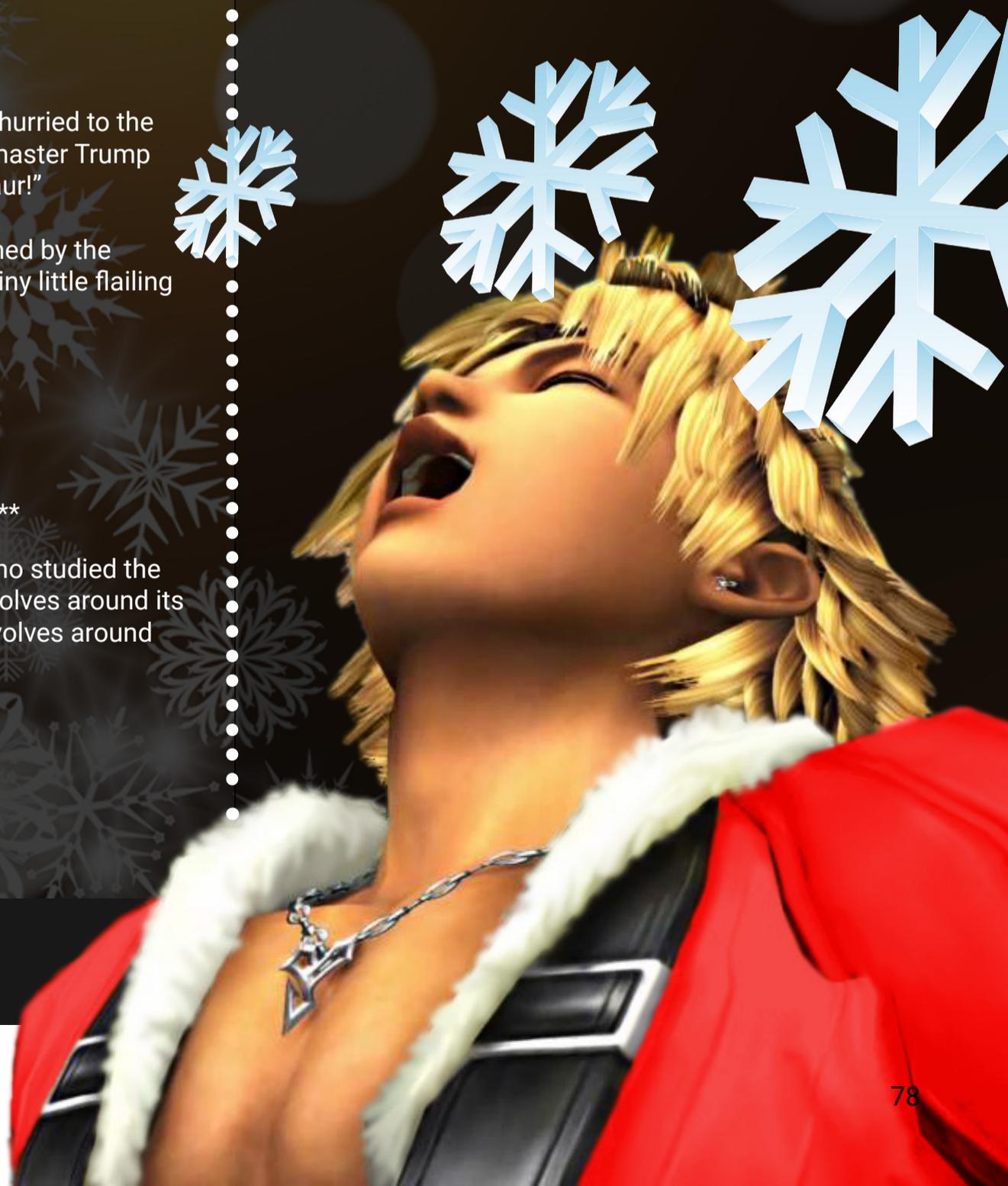


**POLYPHEMOS BROMIOS**  
[CHRISTMAS '17] FUR & COLD



Dionysos' Polyphemos Bromios roasts his nuts by the fire...

# HA-HA-HA



# FASHION CRITIC

## Primarch Galenth Dysley

Celebrations are eternal when the holy crown is a birthday cake.

It is clever to veil sinister intentions by hiding in plain sight.

No religious leader is golden without a casually cryptic reference to the eventual collapse of its society.

Elaborate stole vestments and lavish beads. Perfect for skipping out of service at a moment's notice.

Wearing his smartest waistcoat and jacket underneath the Primarchial pomp is imperative to showing he means business.

Sharp talons are useful for clawing your way to the top of society.

Looking like a chocolate wrapper means his citizens are sweet on him.

These white robes stage that he is pure as the driven Snow.

# dysley

(Though we blaspheme here, we greatly admire Dysley's character designer: Tetsuya Nomura)

**Galenth Dysley** (*Final Fantasy XIII*) was the elected Primarch of Cocoon's Sanctum. This elderly religious leader's public image as a fragile, yet wise, respected human authority figure was exposed to be as fake as the mechanical owl he employed to spy on his citizens. Beneath this Robo-Pope's exploitative mortal guise lurked a multitude of ugly, divine faces...

It's a shame that his holiness' own wardrobe was sacrilegious!



# T I M E C O M P R E S S I O N

Relive Classic FFF Moments

## FFF's Ultimate Member: Kelly / Bambi

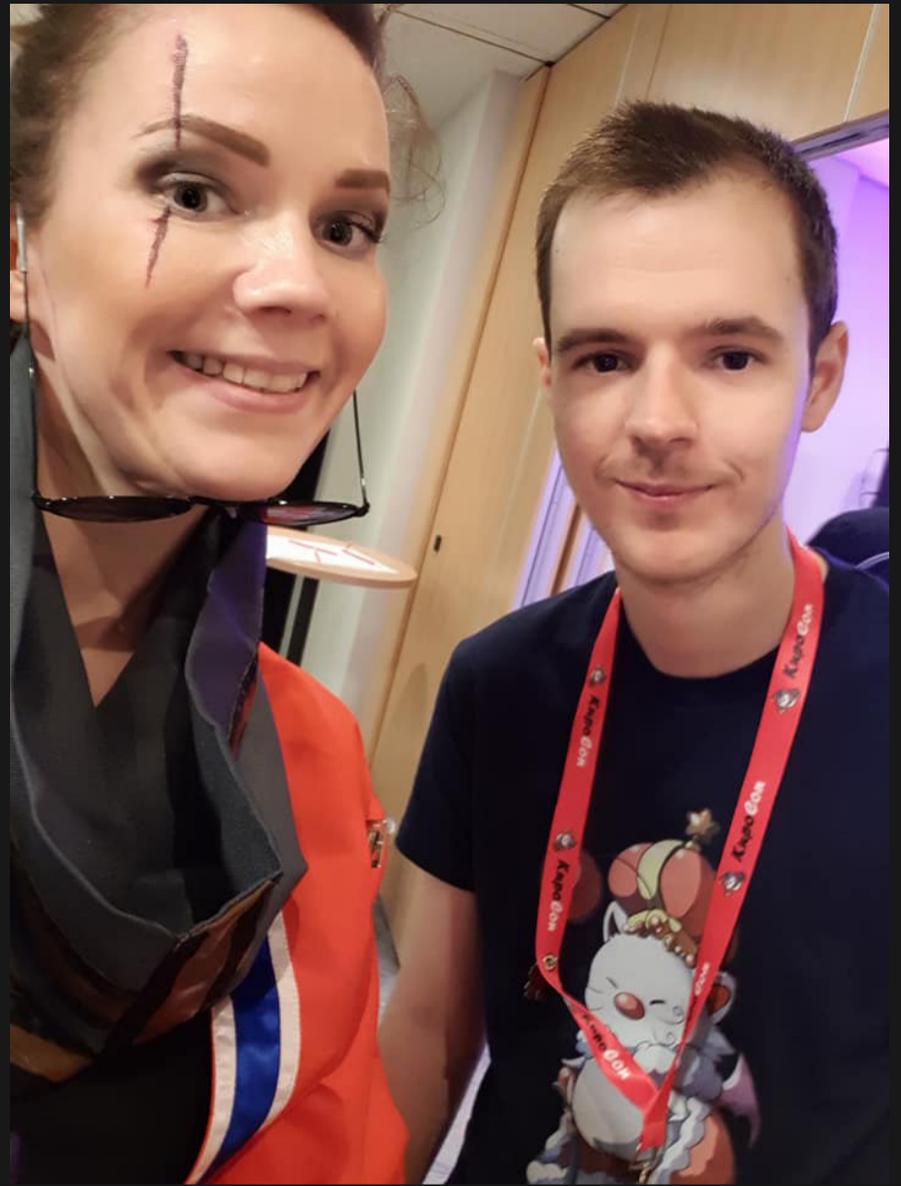
While this recurring section is usually reserved for FFF's memorable moments, this issue we figured one of our most memorable moments isn't actually a moment at all but a very special member.

To say that Kelly (also known by her username Bambi) has made an impression on the culture of Final Fantasy Forums would be an Adamantose-sized understatement. Her joining the forum in 2007 made a North Crater-esque impact on the surface of the community, permanently marking the landscape.

The FFF Veteran has been recognized for her unique phrasing (with humorous keyboard malfunctions and overly punishing her caps lock key). Kelly is an unforgettable character with a raw personality larger than a shoopuf's

backside. She doesn't just shine, she blinds you like Alexander's Divine Judgement. The many adventures of Kelly and her cat Velcro have never failed to entertain us, and we remember fondly the day she almost tucked into a conker until FFF members pointed out that they are poisonous...

Kelly has set some rather important records. She's been Top Poster (the member with the highest postcount) for a decade, and has, so far, met the most FFF members in real life. She also won FFF's Survivor IV (2010), a team-based competition based on the reality TV show where members had to participate in a series of activities and vote each other off the island. Kelly's familiarity with the forum meant that she correctly identified the most FFF quotes, earning her the victory in the final contest.



Auron-Kelly meeting Red XIII and Alex Maine (lead organiser of KupoCon) at Pomathon (Birmingham, 2018). Photographs by Kelly.

Kelly carries Final Fantasy close to her heart. We covered her wedding in our previous issue (including her whopper wedding cake in the style of Alexandria Castle, the envy of all FF fans which was even featured in the Official PlayStation Magazine). Kelly attended KupoCon's Pomathon (Birmingham) where she cosplayed as Auron during the day event, and she is eager to attend many more! We feel she has earned a special award:

KELLY

The FFF Ultimate Member Award!

“# \$ @ ^ & \*”

# Q&A Listen to her story.

## When did you first discover Final Fantasy?

Sometime in 1997, I think *FFVII* must have just come out in the UK. I had a Nintendo 64 which I had got the previous Christmas and instantly knew I was going to have a problem as I didn't have a PlayStation. I was only introduced to it by chance; I was at my aunty's house and someone she knew had come round, set his PlayStation up and said he'd got this new game and asked me if I wanted a go. The only thing I was told about it was to 'just press circle'. I saw that opening sequence of Midgar and the train with the music and just knew that this was going to be something special. Got as far as the first boss in the reactor (died a few times - "attack while it's tail is up" my arse)! I think I was due to go home so didn't get any further, got home and was like... mum, I need to swap the 64 for a PlayStation...finally got one but then it was a good few months til Xmas so had to wait to finally get hold of it. It made a first impression on me like you wouldn't believe. Went on and on at my mum about needing this game - haha. I remember opening it Xmas morning as well as getting a blue inflatable chair (it was the 90s shut up lol). I legged it upstairs with both items, got my chair pumped up and sat myself in front of the tv, got up to the scorpion...and then my aunty turned up and I had to spend a week there - hahaha. Once I got home I absolutely hammered it the rest of the holidays.

## How important would you say Final Fantasy is to your life?

Very! It and the forums got me through a very difficult time in my life; if I hadn't had that chance encounter with the series I would have obviously never found the forums. After I had my daughter I left my partner, went

back to my mum's for a few months, and then moved into my own place, finding myself alone and with a newborn which I found very isolating. The forums introduced me to a social network from within my own home which I very much needed at that time. I suffered quite badly with postnatal depression; Final Fantasy was the escapism I needed as well as all the amazing people and fun memories from the forums. I think the series has shaped me massively as a person, as corny as it sounds. I don't think I'd be here today if it wasn't for the forums and the people I've met and just something as simple as a video game series - haha.

## Do you remember what got you to sign up to FFF?

I can't remember. I think I may have been looking for a forum to join. FFF was the first one that popped up back in August 2007.

## Do you have good memories of FFF?

Aw, back in the day there was some amazing drama. You don't get that anymore (not a bad thing lol) and some of it was bananas; I remember a new forum being set up and everything at one point lol. Also [I remember] the first Survivor not long after I had joined. No one knew who I was then but we had a lot of fun. I remember the photo challenge and Dave being absolutely fuming because one of them was to get a picture of an angry sheep. I randomly have a sheep teddy and I just stuck fake eyebrows on it to make it look mad. There's an absolute load of fond memories. It was there at a time of my life where I found myself in a position where I was very isolated. I was a single mum working full-time and I didn't drive, so the forums was my social outlet. Without it I think I would have lost my marbles.



Stylish posing with actor Jon Campling (King Regis) at the evening event of KupoCon's Pomathon (2018). Photograph by Kelly.



What started it all for Kelly...

**"I saw that opening sequence of Midgar and the train with the music and just knew that this was going to be something special."**



Kelly attempting to beat *FFVII Remake* info out of former Square Enix Community Manager Dan Seto! Photograph by Toneagraphy.



### So, the most generic question: what's your favourite Final Fantasy?

Still a hard one though - haha! *FFVII* was my first, so it will always be *VII* purely for that reason. It blew my mind in a way no game had ever done before. *VII* through to *X* will always take the top spots, *IV* and *VI* very close behind.

### More controversial; what's your least favourite Final Fantasy?

*Final Fantasy V*. I liked the story but the job system absolutely killed me off. I hated it. If it was my first fantasy I doubt I would have ever touched the series again. Special mention to *Final Fantasy II* for the sheer fact that under about 45 mins in I rage quit every time.

### Part of the appeal of forums is to meet friends who have the same interests; would you like to give a shoutout to any friends here?

#freejim (is he still banned?)

### How many members do you think you've met in real life now?

Ooh, now then. I'll list them just so I can be sure. Dave, Pooley, Jim, Lewis, Ami, Lisa, Shaun, Vikki, Dan, Char, Mark, Damon, Joey, Freddy, Danny, Virgil - I think that is everyone...

16 people #\$\$@^&\* hell.

### We remember you used to create and display artwork. Are you still in touch with your creative side?

Not as often as I would like. I crafted a lot of stuff for my wedding and recently finished a random Skeletor painting whilst I've been off work dying this week. I'm way out of practice though.

Do you have any tips for people aspiring to overthrow you as top poster (an unlikely and undesired outcome)?

Absolutely not - hahahaha – a lot of my stuff has been moved to the no post count archive and I'm still at the top, lol. Not sure foruming is the same as it used to be back in the day. It's all social media now so I think my spot is safe, lmao.

How long did it take you to prepare your Auron cosplay at KupoCon's Pomathon?

I cheated and got it off eBay as I left it last minute, like I do for absolutely everything.

Do you have a KupoCon highlight?

Running around like an absolute knob, taking pictures for the wanted posters was fun! Also getting asked to do a twirl off that dude from *Kingsglaive* whose name completely escapes me right now (top fan my arse, how thick am I - hahaha) the hench good looking dude.

What makes you the ultimate FFF member?

My ten plus years of service and the fact that I have lived in that top spot for a few of them as well - hahaha. I've been active across the whole board, starting discussions, I've moderated and been a global mod as well, and when I was active I was *really* active. Won survivor one year too, lol. Damn, I do really miss and love that place!



Auron-Kelly joins the FFX party! Various FFX cosplayers photographed by Toneagraphy.



Timber Maniacs editing team, post Kelly article.

\*Originally Kelly had written: "attack while it's tail is up my arse." The editing team deemed it way too inappropriate for this family-friendly magazine and had to make adjustments.

Thanks for being such a cracking member, Kelly!

# FFF MASCOTS

EXPLAINING FFF'S INSANITY, CHARACTER BY CHARACTER

## MOGRINCH

### What's the deal with FFF's Christmas villain?

Mogrinch is green, fanged and very, very naughty. Having his nativity in Dionysos' doodle-based games sporting pea-green fur, purple wings and vampirically sharp teeth and claws, this evil moogle has made it his life's mission to ruin every Christmas on FFF!



### Mogrinch's first Christmas:

Like a snow-cloaked mountain, Mogrinch's origins are shrouded in mystery. It was during FFF's Christmas 2014 celebrations that Dionysos first opened his mind's door to Mogrinch. The pesky rodent burst in, a perfect homage to some character of Dr. Seuss' outlandish imagination. Is Mogrinch for real, or is this just moogle fancy dress? Dionysos still does not know...

Nevertheless, Mogrinch played his namesake's role with finesse, employing his innate mischievous wit during his debut in the game 'Moogle Merrymaking' (2014) where he served as a foil to FFF members' attempts to decorate the sentient Christmas tree, Toby, with 'baubles'. At the end of each round, the party pooper rolled dice to determine which 'baubles' (mostly involving living, breathing beings...) should be rather unfestively snatched from Toby's branches and destroyed!

Consequently, Mogrinch, dressed up as a seductive female panda in order to tempt a panda down from the tree, hacked Smifftuar (the alter-ego of FFF member iSmiff) to pieces with a candy axe, and smacked Brahnesuki (the horrific amalgamation of FFX's Queen Brahne with FFF member Mitsuki) into submission with a metal chair... And much more!

FFF members tried to halt the decoration defiler's deleterious meddling by placing puppets and plush dolls of Mogrinch on the tree to trick the moogle. Yet the furry

fiend's smarts equalled his skill for spoilsporting; Mogrinch allowed no impostors! He pulled the fluff-stuffing out of his doll doppelganger and threw his cardboard cut-out likeness into a puddle!

Yet all Christmases come to an end and Mogrinch's Christmas party concluded when the Pom-Police arrested him.



### The Christmas Spirit: He's Dreaming of a Fright Christmas...

While securely locked up and presumably incapable of causing mischief, Mogrinch's legacy continued to impact FFF. During 'Haunted House' (an RPG doodle-based game for Halloween 2015, which overran into Christmas) a Mogrinch plush was discovered amongst the creepy pile of toys in the nursery room. During this same game, Toby the Tree suffered post-traumatic stress disorder, remembering the day the sacrilegious Mogrinch plucked mini-Fran (FFXII) from the clumsy conifer's branches and dipped her in chocolate to consume her during Easter...

Meanwhile, Mogrinch spent his Christmases biding his time. Aware of the trauma he had created in Toby the Tree, he somehow managed to manipulate psychic connections to his advantage. Now the Freddy Krueger of mooglekind, Mogrinch learned how to enter people's dreams! During 2016's 'Christmas Story', lazy Mognap overslept and



dreamt of being within the moogles version of *FFXV* as one of Noctismog's 'mog-bros'. When the car radio became possessed by an unskippable Tidus-laugh remix of the Moogle Theme, the group crashed their car and a maniacal Moggrinch emerged from the boot claiming to have stolen Christmas once again! Thankfully, Father Kupomas made short work of the menace, squashing Moggrinch with his sack and ending Mognap's nightmare by rousing him out of his laziness.

Moggrinch's new powers certainly put him at the top of FFF's list of probable threats, so an effort was made to appease the furry demon... FFF approached Moggrinch in his cell and asked what he'd have them do in return for security from his nightmare invasions. His response? He compiled a list to be used for Christmas 2016's 'Scavenger Hunt!' He forced FFF members to take photographs of festive items such as nuts, stockings and antlers.... All in a malicious attempt to catch them out!

FFF did not perform very well.... Moggrinch was able to reap the benefits, using our failure to connive his way out of prison. Now the wealthy Kingpin of moogles, Moggrinch commissioned Moogleangelo to sculpt a heroically posed marble statue of himself, and donated the piece to the Moogle Museum (from Birthweek 2017's 'Moogle Murder Mystery' event) where the verdant villain could be admired by all.

If public opinion shifted in favour of Moggrinch, it was as short lived as the bang of a Christmas cracker. Soon after, Moggrinch was back to being unabashedly evil as he participated as one of many obstacles in Christmas 2017's 'Chocobo Race', tricking helpless chocobos into heading into the Evil Forest, and he even outright whacked one chocobo with his pom-pom!

This brutal assault landed Moggrinch a second spell in prison, this time in Whitnut-on-Sea, which just happens to be the location of another 'Moogle Murder Mystery' (Birthweek 2018).

We are certain that Moggrinch has not had his *last Christmas*...



## FACT FILE: MOGRINCH

**Species name:** *Hoardnuttia seussus*.

**Conservation status:** Extinct in the wild.\*

**Habitat:** Snowy mountains or other people's cosy homes.

**Diet:** Christmas dinners cooked by other people; fried funguar; turtle soup; Ultros calamari; chocolate bunnies; roast chocobo.

**Unique feature:** While certain moogles are known to be mischievous pranksters, Moggrinch's dedication to noxiously negating Noel is unprecedented. The selfish and tradition-wrecking Moggrinch is the opposite of the fun-loving, carefree moogles we adore.

**\*Update:** Moggrinch is the only known example of his species. It is unclear if he represents an unorthodox case of the moogles species, or an entirely new branch. Where he slots into the moogles evolutionary tree (such as where the Ivalician moogles branched away from the common moogles) cannot be ascertained; Moggrinch's bothersome behaviour renders any attempts to study him problematically ineffectual.

.....  
Feeling naughty? You can summon Moggrinch today by using the smiley code :moggrinch: in any post or in the ShoutBox chat. Remind us to keep him on our naughty list!





## I'VE COME UP WITH A NEW RECIPE

Showcasing the original recipes of FFF members. FFF's 'I've Come Up With A New Recipe' competition made its debut in 2017 during our annual anniversary event, Birthweek, and has proved to be a staple addition to FFF's repertoire of competitions.

### Mitsuki's award winning 'Paissa Curry'!

This celestial, scrumptiously appetising recipe was this year's winner at Birthweek 2018.

#### Chef notes:

"According to Linnaete who still actively hunts down paissas, this dish is out of this world!"

#### Ingredients:

White Rice (a Paissa named Shace, beloved brother of Polonius)  
Kashi Oats Cereal  
Almonds  
Chicken (chocobo)  
Potatoes  
Carrots  
Greek Yogurt (for a sweet savory flavor)  
Curry Powder  
Salt  
Pepper

#### Recipe:

Trick a paissa out of its hole. Capture it. Cook it.  
Enjoy!



#### FUN FACTS:

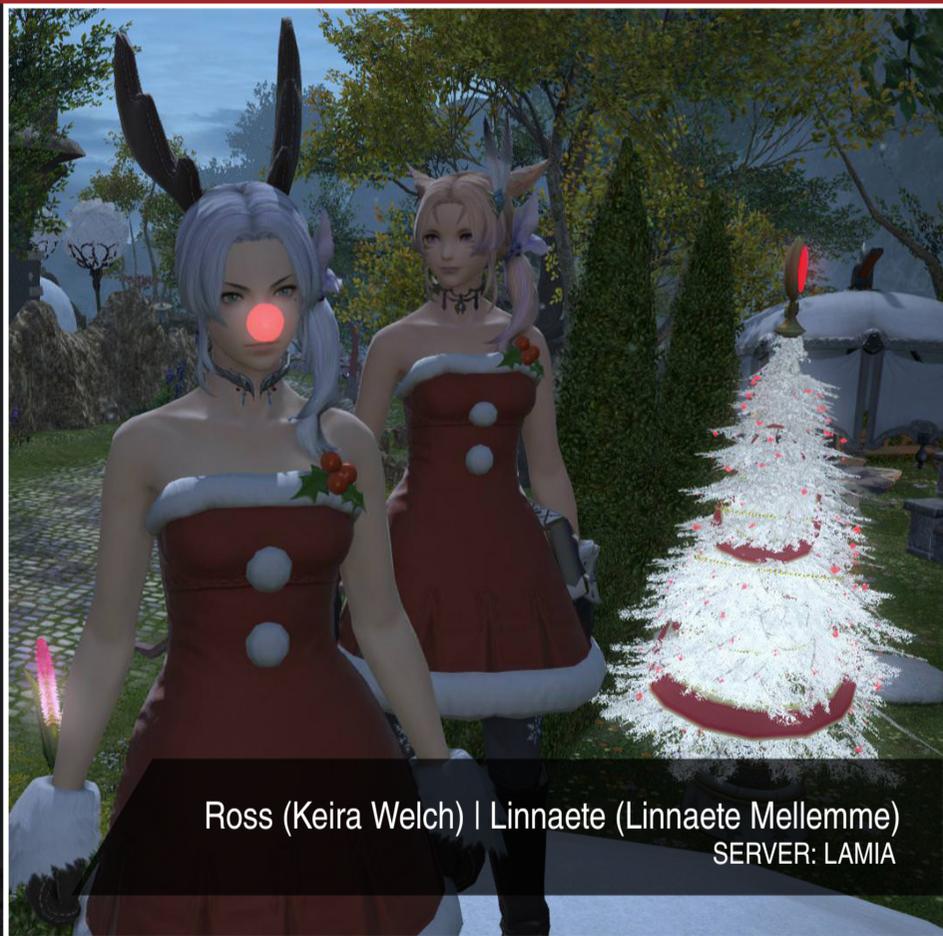
- The curry was a leftover meal from the night before.
- Twigs were used to form the paissa's mouth.
- Mitsuki left the paissa sitting in the bowl of curry for another day. Her kids were rather disturbed.
- No one actually ate the paissa. He was inedible.

\*Mitsuki has since been reported to the Paissa Protection Society...

# FINAL FANTASY FORUMS FFXIV MEMBER SCREENSHOTS



Featuring some of the *FFXIV* screenshots posted by our FFF members.  
Check out our full gallery: [Screenshot Corner](#)







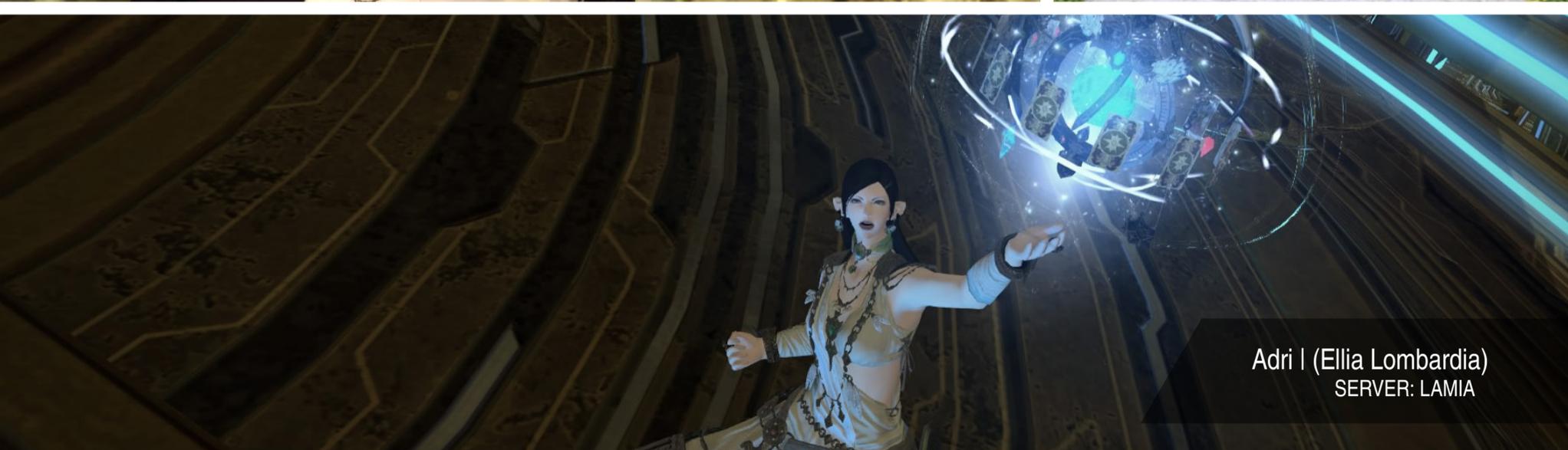
Gaige I (Aurelia Starthorn)  
SERVER: OMEGA



Steve-O I (Yuno Mizuno)  
SERVER: LICH



Six I (Seven Rivers)  
SERVER: LAMIA



Adri I (Ellia Lombardia)  
SERVER: LAMIA



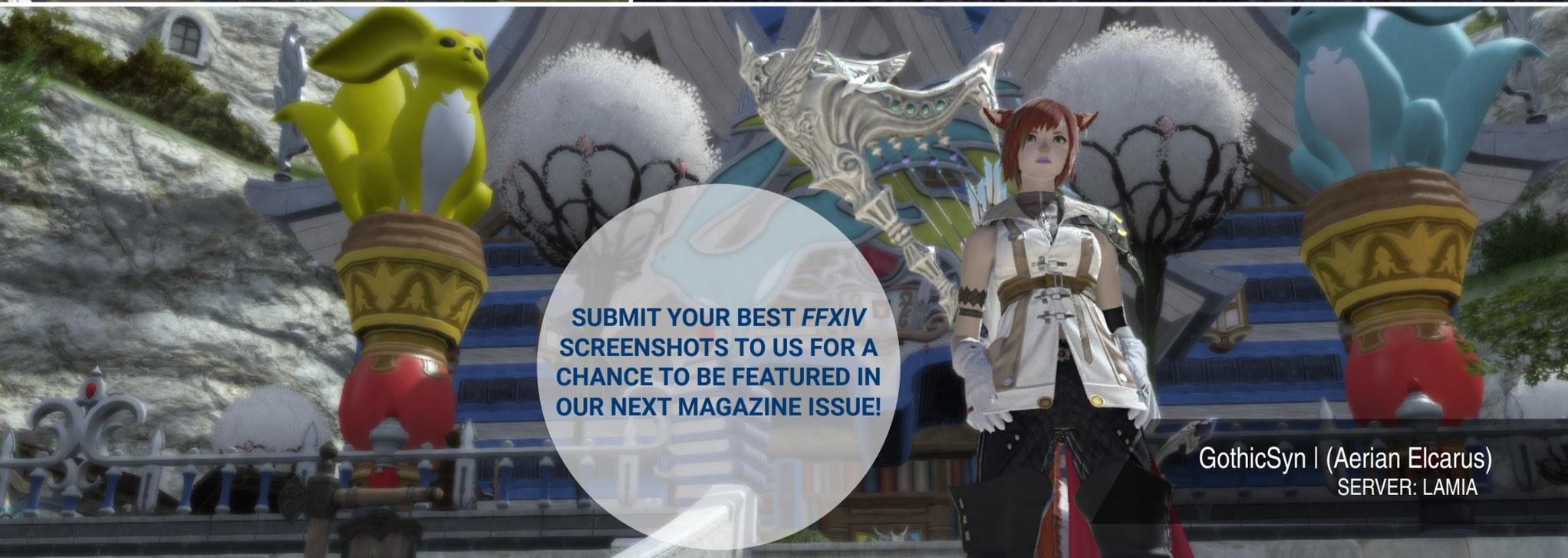
L | (Altani Dotharl)  
SERVER: DIABLOS



Galadín | (Salvae Celeres)  
SERVER: LAMIA



Six (Seven Rivers) | Ross (Keira Welch) | Sly (Smooth Move)  
SERVER: LAMIA



SUBMIT YOUR BEST FFXIV  
SCREENSHOTS TO US FOR A  
CHANCE TO BE FEATURED IN  
OUR NEXT MAGAZINE ISSUE!

GothicSyn | (Aerian Elcarus)  
SERVER: LAMIA



# TURTLE'S PARADISE No. 2

GET FEATURED! Got a project or website you'd like us to share? Contact us at [Final Fantasy Forums](#).



A voice/text chat app for FFF gamers that launched in May 2015. We invite our members to join our [FFF Discord](#) and chat with us. It's mobile-friendly and free!



**FFF Sims Lifestream** - Ever wanted concrete proof that the human race is destined to wipe itself out? Look no further than this episodic feature as narrated by Linnaete, where we recreate a number of FFF members and let them loose in *The Sims 4*.

## FOLLOWERS SPOTLIGHT

Check out some of our treasured followers!

### WINKS GAMING

(Check out his gaming blog!)

<https://winksgaming.wordpress.com>

### ThatFinalFantasyKid

(Final Fantasy and RPG Collector. )

<https://www.instagram.com/thatfinalfantasykid>



## Lost Dreams of the Unicorn Volume 2 coming soon!

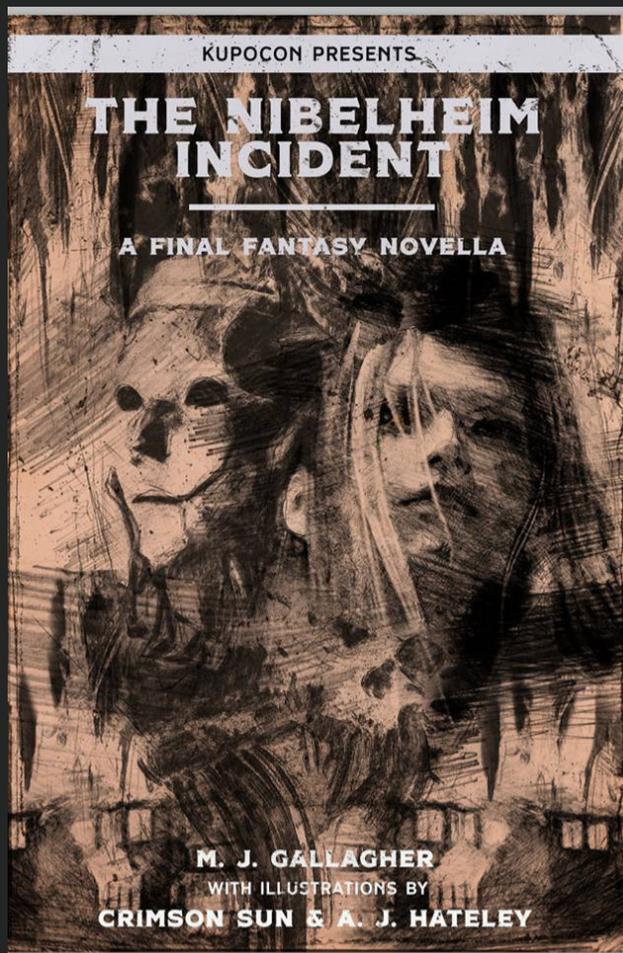
Roko Zaper is planning to release the second volume of his original graphic novel series early in 2019!

*The Lost Dreams of the Unicorn* series is set in a medieval-fantasy world of Roko's creation where sinister 'dark stars' plague the land. The narrative focuses on two youths (Gali and Serena) driven forward by enigmatic visions of a unicorn.

Volume 2 (titled *The Knight and the Centaur*) will be the middle chapter in the *Lost Dreams of the Unicorn* trilogy. It is set to develop more backstory about the main characters, explore the mysterious centaurs, and the narrative promises to take some dark turns...

Final Fantasy has been a major influence on Roko Zaper, and his own unique artistic style and richly imaginative tale Roko relates to the reader should resonate with anyone in the Final Fantasy fandom.

FFF will certainly be dreaming of it this Christmas. You can buy a digital edition of Volume 1 of *Lost Dreams of the Unicorn* in FFF's Mogshop using forum currency. We will also be adding Volume 2 upon release.



## THE NIBELHEIM INCIDENT

Like all parties in *FFVII*, the creative team behind *The Nibelheim Incident* consists of three important people:

- **Mo Gallagher** is mostly known online as the highly praised author of an unofficial novelisation of *Final Fantasy VII*, and *Axtelera Ray™: The Chronicles of Astrone*. He has also attended various KupoCons, even delivering a live reading at 'Pomingham Palace' (London, 3rd February 2018).
- The book's illustrator, **Crimson Sun**, is an Australian artist who creates art and merchandise and is particularly celebrated for collections of Final Fantasy themed tarot cards.
- The cover artist, **AJ Hateley** (Co-Director and Art Director of the UK-based Gametee) designs original, game-related merchandise.

*The Nibelheim Incident* is a fan-written *Final Fantasy VII* novella by Scottish author M.J. Gallagher. Accompanied with captivating illustrations by Crimson Sun and a stunning cover by AJ Hateley, the story of arguably the most important scene in the Final Fantasy franchise is creatively retold. *The Nibelheim Incident* is a behemoth undertaking (comprised of over 200 pages). Presented in conjunction with KupoCon, event attendees can acquire limited print copies of the book.

**You can download it for free here:**

<https://www.patreon.com/posts/21753279>

### Why you should read *The Nibelheim Incident*.

In expanding an iconic moment in the Final Fantasy franchise, Mo effectively delivers a gripping and fresh narrative, building emotional depth and suspense. Being faithfully reverent to the canon and cohesively combining all *FFVII Compilation* material, you can easily forget that it is fan-written.

With various entries in the *FFVII Compilation* also dealing with the 'Nibelheim incident', the official story surrounding this moment can be puzzling. The original game's introduction to this event hinged on an inaccurate retelling by a confused, traumatised Cloud. Each subsequent official retelling of this tragedy has related it from different perspectives whilst adding new details, creating a Rashomon effect. Mo's version, however, smoothly weaves all of these threads together. As an author who has studiously examined the *Compilation* as a whole, Mo has constructed an account which reads complete, in a compelling way which never feels derivative.

The novel is decorated with beautiful drawings by Crimson Sun which capture the soul of the story. The reader is rewarded with an image at the end of every chapter and these pieces are a brilliant complement to the novel. The captivating front cover, illustrated by AJ Hateley, is appropriately gothic in style, suiting the novella's horror themes.

*The Nibelheim Incident* is well-written, equipped with effective imagery and emotional depth. Telling the story by following the perspectives of various characters, you feel like you get to know them better as people and not just their roles. Mo Gallagher breathes life into characters, exploring their feelings, inner conflicts and dilemmas. The complex ethical issues surrounding the Shinra organisation's activities are outlined honestly, dealing with nuances whilst not shying away from illuminating the dark, sinister secrets which exposes the still-beating heart of the horror of the incident itself.

If you desire to relive the nostalgia, this novella is also for you. Imaginative and descriptive world-building, recreating areas from the games familiar with fans, will be sure to trigger affectionate memories; you could easily imagine yourselves stepping into the story we all fell in love with.

We earnestly encourage any fans of *Final Fantasy VII* to revisit Nibelheim through this novella! Let's mosey!

**Like it? Please support the creators here:**

M.J. Gallagher: <https://www.patreon.com/MJGallagher>

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