

# FINAL FANTASY III



Developed by: Square

Published by: Square

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**N**ow we come to it. The big one. For many of you, this game is the reason you're reading this book. And quite honestly, with all that in mind, it's the last chapter I wrote for this volume. It was incredibly easy to slip into intimidation and self-doubt when handling a game of this calibre, repute and significance. Curiously, *Chrono Trigger* might have been a challenge to write about for the same daunting reasons, but it was *Final Fantasy III* that stayed my pen. It was the dragon waiting for me at the end of the adventure, requiring the most thought, the most courage and the utmost care.

Why?

*Final Fantasy III* was only the third mainline FF released in North America, explaining its numbering, but in the hearts of millions, it's *number one*. Better known as *Final Fantasy VI* around the world these days (though we'll refer to it as *III*, since we're talking about the original SNES release), it's celebrated as top-shelf, the best in its series, the 16-bit 2D par excellence, with its masterclass soundtrack by Nobuo Uematsu, its operatic scope, cataclysmic story, balanced humour and pathos, heavy themes, large cast of colourful but flawed characters and, of course, its memorable villain. That's a lot to unpack!


“In terms of the FF that I think is the ‘most complete,’ I believe *Final Fantasy VI* comes close, and does stand out above the other Final Fantasies, especially because it was the last Final Fantasy to use pixel art in all of its visual expression.”

*Hironobu Sakaguchi, producer, FFIII*





music  
NOBUO UEMATSU



As to reasons why it's considered the GOAT, regardless of whether that's your personal belief or not, it's important we set the scene first. Preliminaries are important for something at this scale, but there's a danger of poisonous fumes and dragon sickness before we delve deeper into this labyrinth. With *Final Fantasy II (IV)*, that was ensuring we could answer the question, "What is a Final Fantasy?" but with *Final Fantasy III*, let's address the risk of over-analysis.

We inhabit an age of exhaustingly long YouTube videos, occasionally mislabelled "a quick analysis" when it's just about Sephiroth's left foot for thirteen hours

and how his pinky provides insight into Hebraic mysticism. That hypothetical would be what I would call over- or hyper-analysis. It's no longer vanilla analysis. It's reading so deeply into something that the subject is forgotten and all you see instead is the smiling portrait of the analyser, confident in their cleverness.

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**"One of our staff really wanted to do something with an industrial-revolution atmosphere, so that became the basis: a world of magi-teki [sic] armour, metal and machinery!"**

*Tetsuya Takahashi, graphics director, FFIII*

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I'm aware that you're reading all this in a 500-page hardcover book stuffed to the brim with essays on RPG themes and stories decades out of date, but this risk of overthinking and deconstructing to the point of eradicating any larger point, or artificially manufacturing one, is a real trap I have attempted to sidestep.

**We think more deeply about games** than their own developers did. That's in the nature of the time that has passed since their launch and the fact that deadlines and budgets have no hold on us, but we must take care not to overthink them to the point that we're no longer thinking about them at all.

We can't lose sight of *Final Fantasy III* by hyper-focusing down onto, for example, the (keyword in this context) *theoretical* origins of magitek and its connection to the bygone age of airships and magic

in the collective mythological backdrop to several Final Fantasy games. Such a multiversal topic might be interesting for the fan who has already heard nearly everything there is to say about this game, but it clearly loses sight of what the game is *about*. Worse, it risks the peril of confusing the obscure, the minute, the abstruse, the esoteric and the downright gnostic for reality. The parenthetical can't usurp the substantial.

Headcanon isn't canon. Theory and speculation are intriguing. Speculation and hypothesis can be fascinating. They are only rarely descriptive of the whole, particularly in the context of Final Fantasy, where it seems they exchange the clear interactions of plot and character development for the arcane "secret knowledge" of technical metaphor, extracanonial material or flavours of archaic usage of Japanese terms. It's Tina, not Terra!

There's an element of this that is fuelled by the sensationalism of video game journalism and the necessary hyperbole of algorithm-driven video titles, as well as a need for the analyser to impress their audience with something they haven't heard before, but let's not mistake novel thinking for real analysis. These things may inform us of details, but we cannot build a doctrine on a single letter, and this is partly why I always like to come back to explicit statements made by the creators themselves.



#### MORE DIVA THAN DIVINE

*Final Fantasy XIV* wasn't the only one pulled from the shelves! The original Super Famicom version of *Final Fantasy VI* was taken down in Japan due to a game-shattering bug that could occur in the Opera House. If a player leaves a rat enemy inside the House alive until the World of Ruin but then comes back, fights it and loses the battle, there's no game-over. Instead, the party is taken back to the World of Balance with no way to advance the story further. What were the odds of this actually happening? Anyway, this was *Final Fantasy VI* 1.0. The North American SNES release and PS1 re-release fixed this.