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By: Alexandru Stanescu, Editor, Gaming Reviews (Consoles)



[Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII First Ever Review](#)

A fresh wave of Lifestream on the PSP

While the rest of the world is either playing or waiting for Halo 3, I decided to take the Japanese version of [Crisis Core](#): Final Fantasy VII for a spin. Being a huge Final Fantasy fan, I've been waiting for a proper FF VII sequel for years and I'm not even counting Dirge of Cerberus as one, since the title disappointed me. Crisis Core was announced way back in 2004 at E3 and it was scheduled for a 2006 release, but it was postponed till this year and I have to say that it was well worth the wait. This title can be considered a prequel to the original Final Fantasy VII, which has just turned 10 years old. In case you're a fan of the FF VII phenomenon, you'll surely know that this PSP game is part of a compilation that also includes the Before Crisis mobile title, the anime Last Order and the superb movie Advent Children. Most of you are probably still waiting for the English version of Crisis Core, as dealing with Square-Enix's masterpiece in Japanese is not an easy task, turning a great media product into a source of frustration. I just couldn't wait any longer and I played the Japanese CC: FF VII leaving aside all prejudice. Does it live up to the hype and expectations? Keep reading to find out. Don't forget to check our [cheats section](#), in case you're stuck while playing the game!

StoryCrisis Core focuses on Zack Fair, who's part of a military organization called SOLDIER, trying to earn a First Class ranking. He's joined by the world famous Cloud Strife, the main character in the original Final Fantasy VII title, the blond character being an average Shinra Guard. The Shinra Electric Power Company rules all of the world's continents by force and with the aid of their technological superiority. Shinra uses Mako energy to fuel all of its gear, power plants and buildings and provides electricity for commercial usage. Like in the original title, the action takes place in Midgar, the capital of Shinra's growing empire, but you'll also travel to various other locations. In case you've watched the relatively short Last Order anime, consider that to be the short version of Crisis Core's storyline. As I mentioned before, Zack is the main character of the game and he teams up with Angeal, his senior officer and a member of the First Class. Since this title serves as a prequel for Final Fantasy VII, all the events included in the storyline take place before Cloud's decision to join Avalanche and start his conflict with Sephiroth. Also, in Crisis Core, Genesis makes his entrance as some sort of villain, the man being one of the First Class SOLDIER member who disappeared in Wutai. Zack, Angeal and the famous Sephiroth are sent there to figure out the mystery of missing soldiers. That's all the plot details I can reveal right now, as more of it would be a major spoiler ruining a great gaming experience.

ConceptCrisis Core is a PSP action game featuring tons of RPG elements and many familiar features of the original Final Fantasy VII title. The game includes a new battle system, the DMW (Digital Mind Wave), some sort of slot machine, with reels that are constantly spinning during the battle. Well, they'll spin as long as there's enough SP and when they manage to line up the same character plus the same value, you'll be able to perform a Power Surge, a combo that's similar to the classic Limit Break. In case you can't visualize that "slot machine", try to remember Tiffa's Limit Break from FF VII and all will be clear. The title's combat sequences take place in real time and you can move Zack around as you please, although there's no freedom during battles. Final Fantasy is famous for its random battles, which will also be present in Crisis Core, but they'll be extremely rare events. You'll start fighting right away, once Zack encounters the enemies, without the typical loading screen. Most of Crisis Core's battles pit the main character against a couple of foes, which are fairly easy to defeat. Zack can use his sword or magic to defeat any beast he encounters and there are also some summonable creatures as it seems (I haven't used one yet). If you've played previous FF titles, you should know that the spells included are

Fire, Blizzard or Cure which can evolve into more powerful versions. By casting a spell, Zack depletes his MP bar, but manages to deal tons of damage or heal himself. I'm happy to see that the Materia system has returned, so you'll once again use those tiny magical orbs, placed on your combat gear slots. From the two hours of gameplay I've experienced, I can tell that the green materia will be used to cast spells, the yellow materia will be used for special attacks or commands like Steal and the purple materia increase Zack's stats, like the HP or attack. The player can use the L and R buttons to switch between magic, attacks and items during battles, choosing the appropriate action as the battles take place. While you're not battling, you'll have a chance to walk around Midgar or the other places you'll be transported to and you won't be able to get lost since you'll use a map brought up by pressing the square button. It will show all the doors you can enter, your direction, save points and the locations you are allowed to access. During the game, you should keep your eyes on a couple of meters in order to avoid running out of MP or HP, which means that the game is over for you. There's an SP meter, an HP, MP and AP meter, the last one being depleted by the attacks made available through the Action materia. Crisis Core's menu is pretty complex, showing you Zack's attributes, his gil, the play time, location and tons of options. The player can use or arrange his items, equip accessories, setup the materia, check Zack's messages or play a couple of bonus missions, only available while using save points. Select D.M.W from the menu to view the character avatars you've aligned so far while the reels were spinning, generating those devastating special attacks. Like in FF VII, your character will find chests and open them, getting gil or new items. Since I've just mentioned the items, a shop is also available at any point in the game (excluding battles), so Zack can start purchasing all the potions that he needs. **Gameplay** I didn't quite like the game's targeting system, an automatic one that selects the closest enemy, changing target when you move Zack around. Similar to most action games, you'll be able to parry attacks by pressing the triangle button or roll to dodge the enemy's deadly blows. Move your character around with the directional pad or the analog button and enter houses, buildings or the famous Shinra HQ. Since this is a Final Fantasy title, the enormous quantity of dialogs present in the game shouldn't stall you in any way, as it delivers the plot's details. Some gamers won't put up with the frequent cutscenes and they'll quit playing Crisis Core after a couple of hours, because all they want is pure action. I, for one, want to be impressed by the characters, the storyline and I'd also like to be challenged by the AI every once in a while. I may be pretty good at playing FF games, especially if you take into consideration that I'm dealing with a Japanese title and I don't know a single word in that language, but the game tends to become a ... button mashing affair sometimes. Yes, it pains me to say that, being a FF fan and all, but I had a revelation while showing the battle against Ifrit to my friends yesterday. I was able to play with one hand only, just mashing the circle button in order to complete the fight... How's that for a gameplay feature? Some may say that Square-Enix have started producing titles for a younger audience decreasing the difficulty level, but this trend has been going on and on since Kingdom Hearts came out. Look at the first Final Fantasy VII... It had everything, puzzles, traps, tons of battles dozens of summonable monsters, magic attacks and 3 CD-s filled with visual goodies and an emotional soundtrack. While the eye candy and good soundtrack are still present, the only thing that's keeping me glued to the PSP and Crisis Core is the storyline and not the battles that involve button mashing. I can pretend that the enemies are tougher and start using magic attacks and action materia, but the basic sword attacks should solve all your problems, ending the fight right away. The fans of the series will have pleasant encounters with the superb creatures we used to summon in the other FF games, like Ifrit or Bahamut. I was surprised to see that the PSP supports such quality graphics, that Bahamut's special attacks will be displayed as cutscenes. Cutscenes during battles? That sure sounds next-gen and it's a feature that I'm sure we'll see more often in FF games, on the PS3. If you manage to lose the feeling that you're mashing buttons instead of using strategy and skills to fight, the combat sequences will become enjoyable, as they're fast paced and

involve tons of good-looking attacks. Square-Enix's latest masterpiece has quite a bestiary and you'll fight many of the original FF VII monsters, like the Midgar wolves, a huge robotic spider and tons of critters I'm sure I've seen before. **Video** This is the best-looking PSP game I've ever played and this is not a speculation, as Square-Enix's masterpiece has no rival when it comes to quality graphics. There's that classic camera angle problem and the L and R buttons allow you to turn the camera around, but this feature has its unpleasant limitations. I've been surprised by the fact that the summonable beasts' attacks are FMVs, as good-looking as the Advent Children movie, if not better. Zack's attacks are explosive, filled with sparks and anime-style animations that generate the atmosphere we adore in Final Fantasy fights. The magic attacks are practically those I've seen in FF VII, remade for a 2007 game. Square-Enix have been extremely accurate when designing Midgar and the Shinra building, so all the details were kept, including the motorcycle and truck Cloud and co. used to escape from the HQ in the 1997 title. Is there any point in telling you that the game's cutscenes are superb and emotional? To the fans who cried when Aeris died in FF VII, seeing her alive again will be a one of a kind opportunity to relive the emotions from 10 years ago. **Sound** Piano, violin, orchestral scores and a feminine voice that made my day... This is Crisis Core's soundtrack and you'll surely recognize many tunes from the original game, especially in the battles that take place in Midgar. You'll see that Square-Enix was very keen on rock songs, using them as often as possible in the game's initial cutscenes and fights. The actors who were used to voice Crisis Core are doing a swell job and the dialog is not gibberish as many would think, playing its essential part in revealing the title's plot. **Conclusion** Play Crisis Core: Final Fantasy VII if you're a fan of the series, if you're a hater of the series, if you're a PSP lover or hater, if you've never touched a console in your entire life. Play if for the sake of almost crying when Zack dies in Cloud's arms and play it for the moment when Bahamut splits the skies in two and descends upon the Earth with a fierce attack. Play this title.. You owe it to yourself and to the cult game that Final Fantasy VII is and will be forever. It's a masterpiece, even when played in a language I can't figure out.