



# NOTHING IS EVER FINAL

DOES ANYTHING  
EVER REALLY  
CHANGE?

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This is an early preview of the August 2020 edition of the as-yet-unnamed Geekery Zine from the Geek to Geek Media Patreon. We want to give you an idea of what kind of content you can expect on a monthly basis from us. Any feedback or comments are welcome!



# 24 YEARS AGO...

I read about Final Fantasy VII for the first time. I knew immediately that I wanted (read: needed) to play that game. A demo was released as a pack-in with the Squaresoft fighting game Toba No. 1, so of course I picked it up. On release day.

Like the FF7 Remake Demo, you played through the first incursion into a Shinra Mako reactor, fight the giant scorpion robot, and escape as the whole thing blows sky high. Except there was one major difference in the original demo.

And one major omission from the Remake Demo.

## **Leviathan.**

Every single person I know used Leviathan as a summon in the demo as often as possible. It didn't matter than the summon animation was crazy long. What mattered was simple:

**It. Was. Gorgeous.**

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# “ WE HAD NEVER SEEN GRAPHICS LIKE THAT BEFORE IN 1996-97 ”



We had never seen anything like it. The graphics blew us away. On playing the Remake demo, I waited anxiously until it showcased the game's graphics by letting me summon the watery serpent. But it never happened.

Leviathan never showed up.

And I can't lie here: it was a huge disappointment.

For all the nostalgia and fond memories that the developers of FF7R were relying on. . . how could they omit what was, at the time, the major selling point of the game?

(We had never seen graphics like that before in 1996-97. And even in 2020, FF7R is beautiful by any standard.)

Even in the full game, which I plowed through and beat in about 35 hours, I never once summoned Leviathan. By the time I was able to beat him in the VR combat simulator, I was moving into the final areas of the game -- which are all indoors. And you can't summon Leviathan indoors.

## **Again. Disappointment.**

Now, I don't want you to think this is an article complaining. It's not. Not wholly, at least. I really want to point out how nostalgia plays a role in a person's enjoyment of a remake in different ways than the developers might expect.

While some people wax nostalgic about dressing up Cloud for Don Corneo and his Buster Sword and Braver, I was really looking forward to seeing how my old buddy, old pal Leviathan was doing. And I didn't get to find out.

That said, the remake of Final Fantasy VII is incredibly good. In fact, I think it's probably better than the original in nearly every way. Narrative-wise, it's exponentially better, but I much prefer the turn-based/ATB battles over the pseudo-action real-time ones in the remake.

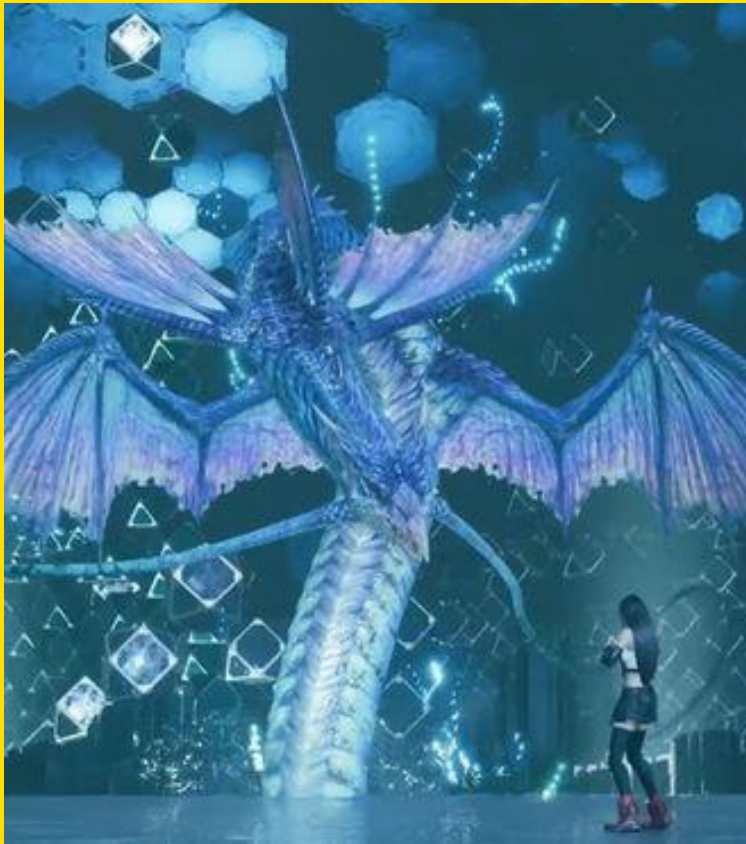
And maybe that's nostalgia on my part, too, because I grew up on the original NES and SNES turn-based RPGs.

But even now, I tend to have more fun with a menu-based system than action. It could also be that I'm getting older and my reflexes are. . . lacking. \*ahem\*

Either way, I'm glad that I live in a world where both exist simultaneously. They feel like companion pieces to be consumed together more than a standalone classic and remake.

The full game of Final Fantasy VII finally came out when I was 14. I remember getting it on release day. I called every toy store (yep, toy stores sold a ton of video games back in the '90s) around, but none had it.





Except for KB Toys in Columbia, TN. We hopped in my mom's car, and she drove my friend and me the 45 minutes north to grab our copies.

We had no idea about pre-orders back then, so we didn't get the cool Cloud T-shirt that came with it. To this day, I curse Teenage Beej for that oversight. Mutter mutter grumble grumble. The game was glorious.

We sunk dozens upon hundreds of hours into it. Leviathan wasn't in the beginning of this one either, but that was okay. Because so much else was.

After I had my fill of Cloud & Co. , I remember selling my Black-label, Day 1 copy of Final Fantasy VII to a guy at my high school for thirty bucks. Thirty. Bucks. Ugh.

Again, I curse Teenage Beej for that.

But Mid-Thirties Beej did something similar: Square Enix was going to charge me for my preorder of the steelbook edition back in November. But the game was releasing in April. I wasn't 100% sure that I wanted to get the Remake, so I didn't want them to charge me that early. I cancelled my pre-order. April came. I ended up buying it, but getting the digital edition on PSN.

Now, I have no Black-label Day 1 edition of the original and no steelbook edition of the Remake.

On the upside, I do have some pretty fond memories of both.

That's why they're doing these remakes. That's why every game and its sequel are getting remade for every new system out there.

Not because of the color of the label or the cool T-shirts they can pack in (though we love those, too).

But because of the memories we have of the original. Because there was something there in the original game that has lasted decades with us. And people my age are willing to pay over and over again in an attempt to rekindle those memories. Even for just a moment.

But does it work? Do the remakes actually fulfill that need, fill that void? Does Final Fantasy VII Remake conjure that same nostalgia that I feel when I see the Ultra Game Players CD-ROM I have on my shelf full of FF7 video clips?

Yes. And no. Kind of. It depends. But yes.

I know that sounds odd, but hear me out. The game itself is totally different in almost every way. But at the same time, it's just familiar enough not to fill that same slot that the original filled, but to bring back the memories of how I felt as a teenager when I played the original.

Sure, I was disappointed in the lack of Leviathan in the demo. And his non-appearance in most of the rest of the game. But I wasn't disappointed by how happy it made me to remember how much I loved seeing the original Leviathan summon on the PS1. I wasn't disappointed remembering how it felt to watch it over and over again.

Or how I giggled to myself when I realized as I wrote this. . . that, for some reason, I just can't manage a Final Fantasy VII pre-order. It's just not in me.



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# BUT WAS THE REMAKE A SUCCESS?

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Yeah, Final Fantasy 7 Remake is an unabashed success. It's a fantastic game in its own right, tells a wonderful and compelling story, but also harbors just enough nostalgia to remind me of why I loved the first game so much to begin with.

## **That's what a remake is for.**

That's why the game companies are making them, and it's why we're buying them. Not because we want to relive those moments of our gaming history. But because we want to remember them as they were. No remake can take that away from us, but it can certainly hand it back.

It's true that you can't go back. No amount of new graphics and new engines and gameplay can make me 14 years old again.

But by just existing, these remakes let us see through those 14-year-old eyes again. For just a moment, we remember things as they were and -- for just a second -- are again.

That's real magic. No materia needed.

