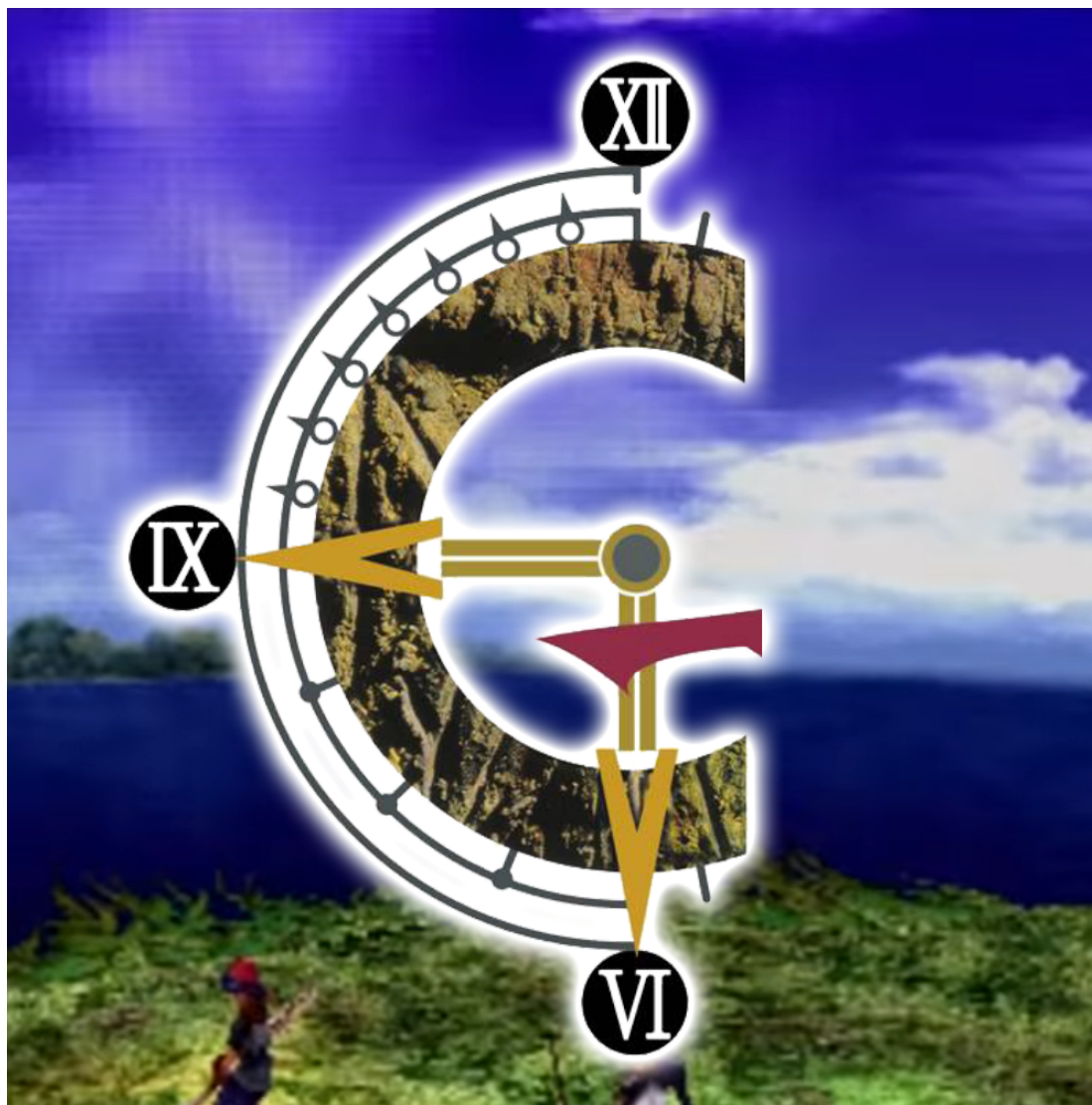


## Sakaguchi's Radical Dream: A Brief History of the Chrono Series

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It all started with a road trip and three brilliant men who decided to “do something no one had done before.” What resulted was an unforgettable pair of JRPGs, each of them in its own right one of the best games ever made. Oh, and there was also an obscure Japan-only text-based adventure game sandwiched between them.

I am talking of course about Square’s Chrono series of roleplaying games: Chrono Trigger, Radical Dreamers, Chrono Cross and the never-realized Chrono Break. While we possibly may not see another new entry in this storied franchise (and perhaps it’s for the best), its legacy is—if you’ll excuse the pun—timeless. The following is a brief history of this unforgettable series.

## Chrono Trigger

Chrono Trigger was the brainchild of what Square would later dub its “dream team.” This included father of the Final Fantasy series Hironobu Sakaguchi, Dragon Quest creator Yuji Horii, and Akira Toriyama of Dragon Ball (the manga) fame. The idea to create a fusion of Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest came about in 1992 as the three were traveling the United States to research the latest in computer graphics. As Sakaguchi would later remark, “We were really naive...”

Nevertheless, Kazuhiko Aoki was brought in to produce and after four days of brainstorming, the mold from which Chrono Trigger would be made had been created. Born from that mold was a game that was destined to be a classic, with a (then) unique time-travel premise, a novel combat system, and visuals and sound that were nothing short of sublime by 16-bit standards. Released in 1995 for the Super Nintendo, Chrono Trigger became an instant classic. Sakaguchi has said that it was one of the most satisfying game projects he’s ever worked on. Chrono Trigger has been rereleased on multiple platforms over the years.



Screenshots from Chrono Trigger | Source: YouTube

## Radical Dreamers

Radical Dreamers was a visual novel adventure originally published in 1996 on the Japan-only Satellaview service. It serves as a side story to Chrono Trigger, and contains many elements and characters that would be reworked into Chrono Cross. So many, in fact, that Radical Dreamers could even be considered the foundation of that

grant any wish. Throughout the narrative the player is presented with a great many choices that will collectively have a bearing on how it all ends.

## Chrono Cross

Though set in the same world as Chrono Trigger, this 1999 PlayStation JRPG is a sequel in only the loosest sense. The story focuses on a new cast, though characters related to the events of Trigger make occasional cameos. And whereas the plot of Chrono Trigger heavily features time-travel, Chrono Cross explores travel between alternate dimensions of reality.

Like its predecessor, Chrono Cross was a darling of the critics, with stunning sound and visual, and some pretty novel design elements carried over from its forebear, such as lack of random encounters. Yet fans hoping for a continuation of Chrono Trigger were left disappointed, and it seems as though this sensational PlayStation entry could never quite step out of Trigger's long shadow. However, with the 2022 release of the Radical Dreamers Edition remaster, maybe Chrono Cross will finally start getting the recognition it truly deserves.



Screenshots from Chrono Cross | Source: YouTube

## Chrono Break

Chrono Break may just be one of the greatest games that never happened. Had it been greenlit, it would most likely have been the more direct sequel to Trigger that so many wanted. Alas, it looks like we may never know...

The trademark for the game was registered in late 2001 and has long since expired. To be clear, Chrono Break was never officially announced by Square, though Sakaguchi and co. have openly discussed the game as a concept. In 2014, long after he left Square, Sakaguchi said "We wanted to continue [Chrono Trigger] as a series... but we just didn't see eye-to-eye with management, and so I went and fought for it, and I officially lost the battle."

And so the Chrono story ends there, at least for now.

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