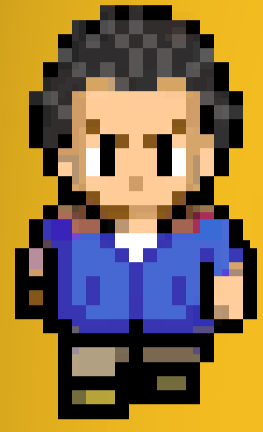


Yakuza LIKE A DRAGON™



Overview

Yakuza: Like a Dragon is a JRPG that is not about a group of teenagers fighting evil monsters to save the world, but rather a cast of middle-aged underclass people attempting to survive against uncaring systems in contemporary Japanese society. In many aspects, the game follows the classic JRPG tropes, but the developers take advantage of the genre and its elements to characterize the protagonist, Ichiban Kasuga - not a stoic teenager, but a goofy, passionate, middle-aged superfan of *Dragon Quest*.

Combat

While the game takes place in contemporary Japan, the developers justify the seemingly unrealistic turn-based combat against monsters by providing the player a lens through the eyes of the imaginative *Dragon Quest* nerd, Ichiban who imagines himself as a fantastical hero in his real life. When the player (as Ichiban) encounters a combat, a literal transformation takes place in which real-life gangsters become wacky enemies wearing exaggerated outfits with a purple flame aura.

Campanions

Unlike the protagonist in the previous entries, Ichiban takes on the adventure with his friends. After being left alone to die at the start of the game, Ichiban meets underclass people like himself along the way. The player explores the city, sings karaoke, and fights enemies to build bonds with those characters, consequently, unlocking more powerful moves. Helping out quirky strangers on the streets also provides Ichiban with special combat aids - a showcase of Ichiban's belief that the battle is not won alone, but with the help of people and the heart to help others.

Metaphors

In every way, Ichiban is an underdog, but his passion and optimism keep his spirit up. The game utilizes visual language throughout cutscenes to capture Ichiban's unwavering faith. Often, the camera looks down on Ichiban, but Ichiban responds by lifting his head up with a smile. Ichiban's back tattoo depicts a dragonfish swimming against the current to reach the top of a waterfall. Once it reaches the top, it will become a dragon. "Like a dragon" as found in the game's title represents Ichiban's effort and growth throughout the game.

Lessons

- **Gameplay** can serve to characterize a character - possibly more so than dialog and actions
- A video game genre could be a **metanarrative element** to enhance the story.
- **Metaphors** add to a player's narrative experience.



ICHIBAN KASUGA
THE HERO

Well, hello!

Once you're at rock bottom, the only way forward is up - Ichiban