

WHEN WORLDS COLLIDE

MORTAL KOMBAT VS. DC UNIVERSE

You've got to come at *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe* with the right attitude. It's not a *serious* fighter in the vein of, say, *Street Fighter II*. You don't need to worry about meaty attacks, hit-boxes and controlling space. It's a fighter of simpler disposition, one that perplexed critics when it was announced, scratching their heads with genuine confusion as to how this bizarre amalgamation came to be.

So, with no mucking about, we'll get straight to that: Superman blasts a fleeing Darksied with his heat vision in one universe, and Raiden uses some of his lightning magic on Shao Kahn in another. There's a bit of a hubbub and some crazy boom tube and portal side effects, causing DC's costumed heroes and *Mortal Kombat's* fisticuff addicted inhabitants to have their respective universes tangled together.

It's probably already obvious that *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe* is a flamboyant, preposterous, nonsensical game. But it makes its own twisted sense: after all, a game universe that stages its coup d'états by having a jolly organized tournament where everyone fights to the death can't really go for the serious route. It's silly, but it knows it. If, as a player, you want to appreciate that silliness, the game invites you in with open arms. If you're a fan of either franchise, you'll probably be immediately amused. It's heavy on its cheesy storyline, but there are lots of rather respectful and canonical references - such as Superman's powers not working properly because of the magical properties of the *Mortal Kombat* universe. The meat of the game is in its story mode, where you're thrust

into nine chapters - each with you controlling a different character - focused around whatever particular side you've chosen to fight as. The stories overlap, so there's a definite encouragement to play as both rosters.

I mean, let's be honest, there's still all the pitfalls and poor technical nonsense that's been plaguing *Mortal Kombat* ever since it leapt into 3D, but *MK vs. DCU* is easily the best entry into the series in a good decade. A lot of the chaff has been trimmed, and whilst the game is far from perfect, it's not the train wreck that many assumed it to be. It lacks the finesse of its 3D fighter brethren, with prolonged loading times and animation that are stunted and remedial compared to the smooth elegance of *Soul Calibur IV*. The developers have tried to work around this by making everything so bold and hyperbolic that it's not an entirely visually unappealing title.



FORMAT REVIEWED

Xbox 360

OTHER FORMATS

PlayStation 3

PUBLISHER

Midway

DEVELOPER

Midway

REVIEWED BY

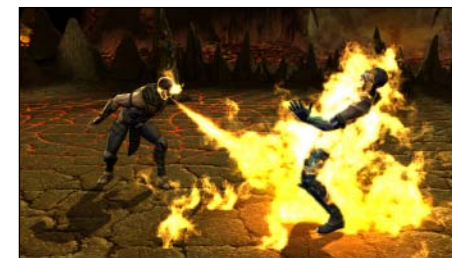
Martin Gaston



**“COMPETENT
BUT
UNESSENTIAL”**

There's something about having a strong, identifiable set of characters which helps the game immensely, and it's certainly more iconic and entertaining watching Superman and Raiden bop around the screen than it was Bo' Rai Cho and Frost.

But there's also a sense that the *Mortal Kombat* side of things has been stunted to allow it to reach a wider audience, and whilst this might frustrate and annoy die-hard fans of the license, it's indicative of the modern gaming climate and all the foibles of publishing. After all, Midway don't get to license the Unreal Engine for free. With the pure visceral spectacle largely stripped away though, the developers have been forced to play it more creatively. Attacks and special moves feel more brutal, and the in-game animations have been stepped up to make the whole experience suitably bloody. Characters get roughed up as fights progress, with their costumes tearing, faces becoming all puffy and masks starting to hang off. DC's heroic characters are denied any opportunity to perform fatalities, though, instead being afforded their own heroic brutalities. The DC villains and the *Mortal Kombat* lot are free to



perform those ever-controversial fatalities, and the European version contains The Joker's point-blank-fake-gun-then-real-gun one properly uncensored, if that's your kind of thing.

There really is no denying that this is a simple game at heart, which makes it ideal for playing with a few mates who don't really specialise in fighting games - move sets are largely identical across all characters, and mashing buttons is a perfectly viable gameplay tactic. But its simplicity ultimately proves to be its downfall, as there's very few unlockable items and little incentive to play the game in Arcade mode unless you're desperate for achievements. There's an online mode that works surprisingly well and with virtually no discernable lag, but because of the inherent basic nature of the game you'll find after a week or so that your fighting skills have outgrown what *Mortal Kombat vs. DC Universe* can offer. It's a shockingly competent fighter, but there's just not enough inside the box to make it essential.



VERDICT ★★★★★