

4 January 2007

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



[Mortal Kombat Armageddon](#)

Kombat Khaos

The arcade rooms were never the same after 1992, when the first Mortal Kombat surfaced, becoming an instant hit. Midway's creation quickly became a franchise and lots of ports, sequels and remakes were done to pay tribute to the god of the fighting games genre. Like any other phenomenon, Mortal Kombat found its way to the TV screens and I bet you saw at least one episode or maybe the movie. There was so much hype about the Mortal Kombat universe, that even the trademark song can be heard in some clubs and pubs.

StoryIf I were to go over the whole "save the Earthrealm" thing all over again, people would instantly start rolling their eyes. Armageddon sure sounds like the end of something, doesn't it? Being the last game of the series (at least on this generation of consoles), all the combat should end and everyone should be dropping dead. Mortal Kombat Armageddon features a storyline that's told in a hurry, a pretext to start kicking and punching your way through the tournament. It figures that the Elder Gods got sick of all this combat and the continuously growing number of fighters and they decided to create a creature that would vanquish all of them. The beast is called Blaze and it's practically a walking flame placed at the top of a pyramid. As you can see in the first cutscene, all the characters ever featured in MK rush to a heavy battle while climbing the pyramid. There's also a secondary plot that appears in the Konquest mode and the story is created so that you'll meet and fight all the characters while exploring the Earthrealm and Outworld. Taven is the main character, a demigod that will battle his brother, Daegon in an attempt to collect the artifacts that his mother and father left him. This will soon turn to a race round the MK universe that will take you to familiar places, like the Lin Kuei temple or the areas infested by the Red Dragon clan, which, by the way are the enemy. Taven will have to protect Edenia from his brother and his allies and unleash Blaze to end the tournament that's gone wild. He'll get captured by Sektor's ship, storm the Lin Kuei temple and battle a couple of familiar guys like Smoke, Reptile or Sub-Zero, integrated in a pretty boring and feeble story. Every once in a while you'll get tips from a huge dragon named Orin and combat hints from holograms of Taven's mother and father.

KonceptWelcome... to the world of Mortal Kombat, again. The "K" thing has also been a trademark for Midway and their famous fighting game, but don't worry, because the menu will provide you with enough "k" letter-based puns to last for a lifetime. Choose between modes like Kombat, Kreate a fighter, Konquest, Motor Kombat or Krypt. Die-hard fans of the old games will rush to experience the Kombat mode with its arcade, versus or practice sub-modes. Pick one of the 60 playable characters and battle your way through the tournament or start a fight with another fellow gamer with the versus mode. The arcade kombat is a pleasant return to the classic tournament mode, where each progress was signaled by an ascension in a list of fighters with their pictures displayed next to them. You may want to try the practice mode, to get accustomed to the controls or the combos you'll have to perform. I guess that 60 players plus a list of customized characters can give you a pretty large area of selection when picking a fighter to suit your style. Customized characters? You heard me right, as this may not be a FIFA game, but the customization you can do can be compared to the previously mentioned title. Ever had dreams that were Mortal Kombat-related? You must be a very big fan of the game if the answer is "yes" and one of those dreams was probably participating in the tournament. That doesn't seem so unreal now, thanks to the Kreate a fighter mode that allows you to create a playable character, starting from scrap. Change the gender, skin color, eye color, the clothing, buy a fancy helmet, some combat boots, a ninja mask, robotic arms, all of them till you get the right combination. When I wrote "buy" I wasn't using a metaphor, all the assets that you'll

use when creating a character will need to be purchased with Koins. Midway took the "k" spree a bit too far altering even the poor coins that have the dragon mark on them. Let's continue...sorry, continue and make our character strong, not only sexy and tall by choosing a fighting style, special moves, weapon style and even special moves. Those may be cool features, but you'll wonder what happened to an hour of your life while taking the customization process to its max. You can even add a short biography and a victory dance to the newborn MK fighter and of course, use him in the versus mode. Konquest is one of the modes that you need to play in order to get enough koins to unlock cool features for the characters you'll create. That's not a tough task, you'll get loaded with cash in no time and every garment or move will be available. Completing the Konquest will take approximately 5 or 6 hours, but it will be worth it, especially for the fans that were really curious to find out the plot behind the whole Mortal Kombat universe. You'll find out many of the fighters' reasons to participate in the tournament and the way they are all related. The Konquest is similar to the Story mode in Shaolin Monks, only with more puzzles and combats. Taven is the character you'll control and you'll walk all over the Earthrealm and beyond in an attempt to find the items that your father and mother left you. All this will be done while escaping the minions of your evil brother and his allies: the Red Dragon Clan. There are two types of combats in Konquest: the standard one-on-one arcade fight and the beat-'em-all-up fight, when a group of ninjas will appear and start hitting you. They will be dispatched by using the action buttons, or some abilities that you'll gain during the game. Weapons will also be available and all the environments will contain hundreds of objects and bonuses to find and pick up. Who said Mortal Kombat was not fun? It might be a bloody game, with brutal fatalities and broken jaws, but Midway implemented a minigame called Motor Kombat, a little way to pass your time between two gruesome fights. Similar to the Crash Bandicoot racing spin-offs, Motor Kombat offers the most famous MK characters, doing for the first time something that's not fighting. They will be involved in a rally, and each car looks according to the fighter's abilities. You'll see Baraka with a car that has blades on its wheels or Sub-Zero with a half snowmobile, half car vehicle. This will be an enjoyable experience especially in the split-screen mode with two gamers trying to push each other off the ledge while racing. Fun was the main feature of the rally mode and all the famous fighters look pretty strange, having a big head and a small body, something that reminds me again of the Crash Bandicoot Tag Team Racing. When you're done being the part-time pilot, take a look at the Krypt to see what you've achieved so far. It's practically a panel where you can view all sorts of content, unlockable or available right from the start. See pictures of the game developers, rare characters photos, listen to the soundtrack, watch cutscenes with details regarding each character's motivation to enter the tournament and many more. Some of the things you'll collect while playing the Konquest mode will be displayed on the Krypt's wall. That's quite a creepy name for a place where you can see pictures, watch videos or listen to music, but Mortal Kombat was never the type of pink and cute game. Don't think that you can toy around with the Krypt for free, as every video, song or picture must be unlocked by paying quite a few koins. **Gameplay**OK, here I am, at the first cutscene, yeah I admit, I am impressed and I am not a Mortal Kombat fanatic. I hoped to find more cutscenes like those, but the only ones I got were short and boring. It frustrated me that during gameplay, and by gameplay I mean specially the Konquest, the boring cutscenes couldn't be skipped. While playing the quest-lookalike mode, you'll spend most of the time battling groups of enemies, dodging traps and collecting koins and rare items. Some of the battles you'll fight will be timed and various awards will be given depending on how well you handled them. Mortal Kombat can be a very tough game even if played on the Novice difficulty and I am sure you'll die more than once, but that can only please the fans and challenge them yet again. The autosave will be very useful during the Konquest, as some bosses can be a real pain and you'll really feel frustrated by some of the traps you'll encounter before entering the Lin Kuei temple. Checkpoints are scattered all over the place, usually near bosses, or right before the traps. Careful with the chests you'll encounter as they can hide poisonous traps

and you'd better stay away, because health will quickly run out in battles that involve more than one opponent. If you're a total noob, you'll still like Mortal Kombat, because some holograms of Taven's mother and father will teach you how to handle the seemingly simple Konquest mode. The ones that played the previous installments will play mostly arcade, I can bet on that and they will enjoy the gameplay and the 34 arenas you can fight on. 60 fighters, customized ones, new and old characters gather in environments you saw in any of the previous Mortal Kombat games. Weapons will be available in both arcade and Konquest, I'm not talking about the weapon you draw by pressing L1, but the ones that are available as pickups. One would assume that having a weapon increases the chances of winning a battle. Well, it's not quite like that and you'll notice that a player with fast moves can easily defeat an opponent with the best maces and swords. At the bottom of the screen you'll be able to see that style that you or your foe use during combat and there are some familiar names, usually ended in "kido", and the ones you'll create, excuse me, kreate under the name "mykido". The control will be done by using the analog mostly, but the D-pad is also available, which is pretty cool for the players that hate the analog stick sensitivity like I do. There is a little problem with the fluidity of the movements during the battle, because the levels seem not to be so 3D and the characters end up moving in circles instead of having the free roaming we loved in Mortal Kombat: Shaolin Monks. Dodging traps will be another activity that Taven will do, most of his time, between two boss fights and some koin collecting quests. While the bosses may frustrate the player a bit, the normal enemies are no challenge at all and their only strength is their number. Too bad for the predefined sequences that appear during Konquest, as enemies will come in waves and won't vanish till you hit them with the attack mentioned at the beginning of the sequence. Taven will also use some sort of spells, four of them and those are pretty cool actually, being useful when the place gets crowded. Mortal Kombat Armageddon is a fun game to play with your friends, but not much of a party guy when played in the single arcade mode or the Konquest koin collecting challenge. Leaving the "k" jokes aside, I must say that I loved the neat combos you can perform while fighting in the arenas from the arcade mode. The surrounding environments are not there just for the eye candy and they will be useful in combat. There are fan fatalities and those are not fatalities made by MK fans, but the rotating fans that eviscerate every character that has the bad luck of being thrown towards the spinning deathtrap. Motor Kombat is fun to play, but it doesn't quite fit in between these bloody battles. It is a pretty easy to play game, and you'll win most of the times, provided that you don't fall off the edges of the track. Pickups and various colored tiles on the track will be extremely helpful in your task to end the race as number 1. Scorpion inside a race car, making it to the podium? Not quite a convincing picture... **Video** One wouldn't expect to play the latest Mortal Kombat sequel in 2D or with crappy graphics. That's not the case here, as the eye candy in this installment is pretty consistent and you'll step on human heads while playing with Taven and leave blood trails behind while fighting in the arcade mode. Blood drops may not be much, as they resemble molecules, but the stains on the floor sure are convincing. You'll interact with glass walls in the arcade, by throwing the foe through them or inside the fans or maybe you'll like to break walls and shatter wooden fences while doing the Konquest. The traps are cleverly designed and there was one challenge that looked particularly good: a flaming mouth that shot fireballs towards you. The whole task of getting past it and the graphics used in this event were surprisingly good-looking for a game that has the quest as a secondary option. You'll see hundreds of gallons of blood being spilled on the MK floors, lava all around, sparks flying when you do magic and a big bloody skull when you die. There's a "floor concept" while fighting your way up the MK pyramid and you'll find out what that means by hitting your enemy with an uppercut and sending him to the upper floor. That makes me nostalgic when I remember the good old pixels falling from high above after a foe was sent above. If you stop for a second and take a look around Taven while konquesting around, you'll notice that spiders walk on the floor and birds fly in the distance. The ice looked very good in the Lin-Kuei mission, and every icicle I broke

really had its physical credibility. During arcade combat I had the chance to draw my sword and give those ninja-wannabes some serious walloping, just to notice that after some hits blood started dripping from their faces and they couldn't see. Pretty nice feature, I must say! Cutscenes are pretty good fatalities didn't disappoint me, but their numbers did and that's sad considering that every player has the same set of finishing moves. **Sound**Midway, Midway, you nostalgic guys! These producers used the same sounds that the original Mortal Kombat series had. There's the punching sound, the alert that lets you know how much life is left, the "fight" being said by Shao Kahn. For the aficionados this may be heaven, for the non-fans, it's mute kombat all the way. The music doesn't impress, even if some tunes are hidden content and you'll have to fight your way through the Konquest, just to get some songs that will bore you to death. Engines roar while playing the Motor Kombat and you'll scream, I mean the character will when he'll fall in the lava river or the water. Each character has a theme song, as well as having a theme video, I'd expect them to have some sort of a band in the distant future. For an arcade room fan, the line "Fatality!", at the end of a fight is similar to a goal being scored by the player of a very poorly trained team in an important match. Other than that, dialogs aren't worth to be mentioned, as they are only the means to find out what's going on in the Mortal Kombat universe. **Multiplayer**Bring your customized character to the slaughter! Plug in two joysticks and start the fun of your life. You'd better warm up the thumbs as this Mortal Kombat installment involves using all the buttons on your joystick. The versus mode is fun to play and you'll also be able to play with up to 8 players online in tournaments that will get your name written in the hall of fame...in blood!Motor Kombat also has a two player mode, that will have the same entertaining value as any of the Crash Bandicoot racing games, if not less. Let's admit that people buy Mortal Kombat strictly for the versus battles, the acclaimed fights that made this game the phenomenon it is. And I can tell you one thing: Armageddon is insanely fun when played by two people, because the fighters won't be the only ones screaming when they get hurt. Some gamers really play their heart out with games like Mortal Kombat. **Konclusion**Could this be the end of Mortal Kombat? Armageddon is not an encouraging term and the producers are trying to let us know that the saga is ending, or about to end. That's what too many rebirths of characters, sequels, spin-offs and secondary storylines get you. We have some new elements, ranging from a zombie Liu Kang to a biped Motaro, but the skeleton remains the same and as long as there are people that take pride in wearing MK T-shirts this mania will never end and hopefully the games won't come to an end, either. Armageddon is a pretty decent game, but the innovations are very few, comparing to its predecessors and Midway's creation is saved by the many playable characters and the pleasure of kreating your own character.