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



[The King of Fighters XI](#)

King of failures

Having played the great Dragon Ball Z: Budokai Tenkaichi 2 fighting game, it's pretty tough not to have high expectations when playing another title pertaining to the genre. And it's not just any title, but the last installment in the famous [The King of Fighters](#) series, one that rings a bell for the arcade fighting games fanatics. SNK Playmore, the developers have tried to keep the old-school look and style, the same combat mechanisms and added a huge list of characters to complement the classical recipe. Did I mention that this is a 2D game? Well, if you're expecting Tekken or Mortal Kombat, forget about it. However, if you're still giving the first Street Fighter a go on your GameBoy, you'll surely love this title. **Story** It will be quite difficult to figure out the game's story, unless you're a fan and you pay attention to the cartoonish cutscenes that the game offers at some point during the story mode battles. KOF XI continues the storyline of the 2003 game, featuring Ash Crimson, who stole the Yata Mirror and has nasty plans that regard Orochi. You'll see the return of an old character, Eiji or the famous Duck King and a couple of new ones like Elizabeth. They all appear just in time for another [The King of Fighters](#) Tournament. After all, who cares about the storyline when all the plots are heading towards some violent competition? Each character's objectives will be revealed as you play the game and unlock more cutscenes, including their ending FMV. **Concept and Gameplay** This is one of the few games I've played recently that required a little tuning of my TV, before starting. The screen was not centered and the game didn't quite have the looks of a 2007 title, so I tried it on a bunch of TV sets and got the same results: bad, bad, bad. After a noisy presentation you're taken to a dull menu, where you can select a couple of modes, ranging from the classic story more, to the arcade, challenge, endless, or tag modes. If you're searching for some sort of motivation, try the Story Mode to find out a bit more about the characters and their backgrounds. The Endless Mode is quite easy to figure out, as it's exactly what the name says, an endless series of fights. I found the Challenge Mode to be the most interesting of all since it featured handicap battles, that were far more difficult and challenging than the rest. Imagine having to fight three characters with a single one of your side, or having to start the battle lacking some HP, or without the possibility of performing combos. Also I must mention that the AI of the game can only be considered decent in the later battles of the story mode, because you'll easily defeat any opponent even on the toughest difficulty level. If I was that good, imagine what an old KOF arcade fan would do! You'll be able to do the classic runs, jumps, guard cancels, rolls and the new shifts, that are not much of an eye candy, but they're extremely efficient. If you're not familiar to the KOF series, you'll be surprised to find out that the game's based rather on tag team fighting than solo combats. You'll have the option of selecting three fighters at any point of the game (with the exception of one or two battle modes). Also, you will be able to use a Quick Shift, that will change your character while performing a combo, in order to perform a stronger attack. Unlike the rest of the fighting games on the market, you won't be dead meat once the timer runs out, because there's a judgment bar to look out for, that will decide whether you win or lose the battle. When the time's up the winner is decided according to the position of the judgment bar: if it's closer to your team's HP gauge you win, and if it's closer to your opponents' gauge, they win. This bar shows the skill of the fighters, so you'd better perform tons of combos and try to avoid getting your characters killed in order to be the victor, when the time's up. There's a neat defensive gameplay mechanism in The King of Fighters XI called Saving Shift, that allows you to change your player if you see that he's taking a lot of damage and that your enemy's combo is a long-lasting one. The latest KOF title also brings an entirely new feature, called

Dream Cancel and this one is similar to the Super Cancel move used in KOF '99. It will allow your character to interrupt his move and start another one, stronger than the last, creating super combos. You might wonder if the controls are any good in KOF XI... and the answer is "no", because even if you use either the analog stick or the D-pad, the whole action seems to be a bit slowed down. At my first play I messed around with the options menu in order to speed things up and there is a fast gameplay option, that really makes fighters move faster, but still, you'll be frustrated by the length of the battles. Even if it's a timed battle, sometimes it just takes two or three combos to finish an enemy, while in some fights you'll be countering the whole time and parrying and waiting for a chance to deliver some killer blows. The character roster is huge including the Ash Team, the Agent Team, the Rival Team, the Fatal Fury Team, the Art of Fighting Team, the K' Team and many many more. **Video** The King of Fighters XI looks very good ... for a Playstation game, and I mean the first console, so no way that this title has anything that says "2007" in its visual department. The backgrounds are mere pictures, with a little bit of movement caused by feeble animations that show cats moving, or a couple of characters watching the battle. The fighters are stylish, colorful, dressed up and their 2D looks will make a Street Fighter game jealous, but for a PS2 fighting games fan, such masses of pixels equal a total failure. While playing KOF XI, I couldn't see any combo that would make me go "wow!" and want to play the game again and again. Usually, the supermoves are represented through colorful sprites that appear near the character's fists or surround his body. One thing that got stuck in my mind, while I was being cornered by an opponent, was the fact that any character can be "left out" of the screen. Picture Eiji being pushed to the left side of the screen and half of his body vanishing out of the blue. You'll see that happening quite a few times during the game, but it's a just another flaw in a title that's gone wrong. The cutscenes are far from being impressive, even if they've got the anime looks and clichés, because they're short lasting and they don't deliver the feeling that we're searching for while watching Japanese cartoons. **Sound** Finally, here's a pretty good aspect of this game: the audio. The rock and techno tracks are the salt and pepper of this KOF title, giving you the speed sensation that the gameplay fails to offer. The dialogs are not worth mentioning, but the in-game sounds are pretty decent, especially those that appear during battles. Each fighter will scream, taunt or shout with their strong anime-style voices that can make you laugh, get angry or just want to kill the enemy that keeps using an annoying taunt. **Multiplayer** As most of the fighting games, The King of Fighters XI is a title that people enjoy more in the multiplayer mode. Since the game has such a poor AI, it's much more exciting to fight a human opponent, especially if he or she is a KOF fan. However, the gameplay mechanics are the same and if you feel frustrated while playing the story mode, the feeling will be the same in the multiplayer, this time shared between two gamers. **Conclusion** The question is: "Should I spend my money on this game, or should I pay the same amount in an arcade room playing the older version of The King of Fighters?". I'd go with the second one, because it would be the same experience, perhaps a more pleasant one, because of the better controls. When you've reached the eleventh installment in a famous series, fans will not forgive slip-ups and a failure will most definitely ruin the brand. Will the number XII mark a return to success? Will we even see such a title? One can only hope for the best, because it would be a real shame to let such a famous fighting saga go to waste.