

MDK 2 – Windows

Developed by: BioWare Corporation (<http://www.bioware.com>)

Published by: Interplay (<http://www.interplay.com>)

Reviewed by: Tim Maxwell

Official Site: <http://www.interplay.com/mdk2/index.html>

Genre: Action

System Requirements:

- 200 MHz Pentium Processor
- 32 MB RAM
- Hardware video acceleration required
- 4x CD-ROM Drive
- 300 MB free hard drive space (full install)

Supports: joystick/gamepad, 3D Sound

ESRB: Teen

Overall Rating: 8

Graphics: 9/10

Sound: 8/10

Documentation: 8/10

Getting Started: 7/10

Gameplay: 8/10

Value: 8/10

The Good Press: Terrific graphics and voice acting; humorous character interaction; killer gameplay and atmosphere.

The Bad Press: All the different control schemes can get confusing; a few annoying jumping sequences; some clipping problems; the game is over too fast.

Overview: *MDK 2* surpasses the outstanding original in almost every way.

Tips:

Learning to strafe effectively is one of the game's most important skills. Perfect it, or you won't last long.

Use your surroundings to your advantage. Often times, you can safely hide behind a wall and snipe away.

Games don't rank much higher on the "zany scale" than the original *MDK*. With weapons such as the "world's most interesting bomb" and sidekicks like a six-legged robotic dog and crackpot scientist, it came as no surprise that *MDK* was a rather strange, yet thoroughly enjoyable title that was just begging for a sequel. It took awhile, but Bioware has finally released *MDK 2*, and I'm happy to report that it's even crazier and more fun than before.

The story in *MDK 2* picks up shortly after the original left off. Just when our hero, Kurt Hectic thought he could head off to the Caribbean for a nice relaxing vacation, those pesky aliens made a return appearance, leaving a trail of destruction in their wake. It's once again up to Kurt -- armed with his handy ribbon chute and sniper helmet -- to destroy the evil race and once again bring sanctity to the planet.

It was thought that Kurt himself could accomplish this feat alone -- much like he did in the original *MDK* -- but early on, it becomes apparent that he'll need a little help from his friends. So this time around, you get the opportunity to control Max, the uzi-totin' stogey-smokin' robotic dog, and even the reluctant Dr. Hawkins, who would much prefer to use his brain than his fists. Each of the characters has a unique control scheme and use different weapons and items, so you can rest assured that each level will require different strategies. While Kurt prefers hiding in the shadows picking off enemies from miles away with the sniper helmet, Max feels much more at home with an uzi equipped in each of his four free hands and obliterating anything in his path. The good doctor's missions, on the other hand, require much more thought and hand-eye coordination to complete.

No matter which character the game sticks you with, it's a good bet you won't find any weapons quite as hokie as those in *MDK 2*. Yes, you've still got the standard array of chain guns and mortars for Kurt, but things really get interesting when controlling the nutty professor. His arsenal consists solely of a few household items scattered about (toasters, hand-dryers, duct tape, etc.) and brainpower. To succeed, you'll need to figure out which items can be combined to create weapons. For example, mix a few dirty towels with a bottle of alcohol and voila, instant Molotov cocktail. Unfortunately, the doc never really creates anything all that exciting – a leaf blower is fine to clean out the yard, but when facing an alien invasion, a rocket launcher would've been handy.

The first edition of *MDK* was originally released for the PC, and was later ported to the console. The reverse is true with the sequel, which was originally released for the Sega Dreamcast. Although most agreed that the DC version was a great game, many (myself included) scoffed at the confusing control (who ever heard of using the buttons for movement?). Yes, it was customizable, but even as a console game, *MDK 2* feels much better on the PC -- mainly thanks to the freedom of control offered by a keyboard and mouse. Sure, you can still plug in your trusty Sidewinder pad and take the game for a spin, but equipping the characters and using items is much easier with the keyboard. Aside from this, Bioware has done a tremendous job of porting the console title, while avoiding some of the pitfalls that typically bring down console translations. Simple interface helpers like mouse support and an anytime save feature seem rudimentary, but you'd be amazed at how many games forgo these features to get the game on the shelves faster (read: *Final Fantasy*). That said, *MDK 2* doesn't have an especially complicated interface, but kudos to Bioware for making it simple and intuitive.

I've always been a big advocate of the "graphics and sound don't make the game" philosophy, but in *MDK 2*'s case, I'm willing to make an exception. Simply put, the visuals in this game are awesome. I've seen some prettier and more detailed games before, but *MDK 2* stands out simply because of the creativity in the level design. One minute you'll be duking it out aboard a giant space station, and the next you'll find yourself doing a little underwater exploration. Combine the beautiful graphics with the brilliant (and often downright hilarious) voice acting and you've got the recipe for a great game. I don't want to spoil any surprises for you, but rest assured that some of character interactions will have you rolling around on the floor (walk Dr. Hawkins over to the jukebox once and you'll see what I mean).

Despite its humorous nature and unparalleled atmosphere, *MDK 2* does have its share of minor problems. First off, the game does feature a good number of difficult jumping puzzles and some annoying levels (don't get me started on the fish-through-the-maze debacle). Luckily, the frustration level is eased by the ability to save the game whenever you like. The biggest problem, however, might be the fact that the game only features ten levels. As previously mentioned, all of them are long and challenging and offer quite a bit in the way of variety, but once you complete the game, you probably won't want to jump right in and start over. Clipping is also an issue in tight quarters, but nothing too serious.

Overall, *MDK 2* is a nice diversion from the ordinary *Quake*-style shoot-'em-up. There is enough strategy involved to keep adventure fans out there happy, and enough running and gunning to appease the twitchy types. If nothing else, Bioware deserves mad props for delivering a game that is not only creative and a blast to play, but one that will tickle your funny bone at the same time. If you're tired of the same old shoot-this-guard, find-this-key, flip-this-switch gameplay, give *MDK 2* a shot – you won't be disappointed.