

Video Game Review: 'Major League Baseball 2K12' Strikes Out Swinging

Submitted by [BrianTT](#) [1] on March 12, 2012 - 9:20pm

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CHICAGO – I have long-defended 2K Sports' "Major League Baseball" franchise, more commonly referred to as "MLB2K," against the claims that it doesn't compare to Sony's more acclaimed "MLB The Show" and encouraged hardcore baseball fans to play both games. In fact, while I understood that "The Show" was a "better game," recent installments of "MLB2K" actually took up more of my personal playing time. We'll get to our RAVE review of "MLB 12 The Show" soon but even if that title had fallen below its recent quality level, "MLB 2K12" would be considered a shocking disappointment. 2K Sports is losing their MLB license after this year and there are rumors that they may not look to renew it. If that's true, this series will go out with a whimper and not a bang.



Video Game Rating: **2.5/5.0**

As my momma always says, let's start with the positive notes. I love the presentation of the various modes in the 2K franchise, particularly the idea that the game often builds itself around what's actually happening in the real world. Boot up the game and you'll see one of the best real world match-ups of that day waiting for you to play it out with a controller in your hands. It's just cool to tie a simulation directly to the actual game and it's a great feature in both this game and the vastly-superior "NBA 2K12," arguably the best sports franchise on the market today. The entire presentation when you start up the game from the menus to standings/stats to mode selection looks and feels right. These games are well-structured in a way that gets you excited to play.



MLB 2K12

Photo credit: 2K Sports

Another positive is that 2K hasn't ditched their stellar pitching mechanics which involve specific motions with the control stick instead of mere button pushing. The control stick batting isn't quite as responsive but the pitching feels organic and smoothly designed. I enjoyed being on the mound in "2K12" more than being behind the plate and that's a rarity in a baseball game, which is usually about wanting to run up the score and not create a pitcher's duel. I liked how pitching responded to the course of the game as pitches become harder to pull off if they don't

work early in the game. If a fastball turns into a single and then a double, I wouldn't try it a third time. And the pitcher fatigue feels well-designed. It could be argued that the pitching is too easy (but I'd just like to think I'm too good at it...let me have my little ego boost.)



MLB 2K12

Photo credit: 2K Sports

Last year I lamented “an unacceptable number of glitches” and I'm back to report that they seem even worse this year. Prince Fielder rounding first on an obvious single through no input from me. Ramon Santiago throwing to third instead of first even though I definitely pushed the stick in the right direction. An announcer talking about it being “early in the game” in the 11th inning. Another announcer talking about how time is running out to score in the 3rd. And a third announcer talking about a ball just past the first base bag is “deep enough to score the run from third.” I know announcing should be a bonus and not the meat of the judgment of a game like this but it hints at a laziness in development when there are this many flaws in the actual game presentation. With “The Show” being as incredibly refined as it is, the comparisons make the rough edges of this title stand out even more.

And those rough edges show in the presentation as well. The stadiums look good but the crowds are generic, repetitive, and inconsistent. It just bugs me when the announcer talks about how cold it is in April and then the crowd is rendered in t-shirts. Players sometimes do that thing where it doesn't look like they land quite as much as they float. They have casual movements — stepping out of the box or moving to the ball, for example — that just don't look correctly animated. They're not glitches, per se, but they do feel like more elements of a title that hasn't been lovingly developed enough. The fact is that the “MLB 2K” franchise hasn't really changed much since the 2010 edition and I wonder if the team behind it haven't given up a bit on refining. It will still sell. It won't get the reviews of “The Show.” And this may be it for the franchise. It almost feels like senioritis or a franchise unwilling to make the big moves to win the World Series.



MLB 2K12

Photo credit: 2K Sports

As for modes, “MLB 2K12” includes what you'd expect, including the aforementioned “MLB Today,” current rosters, Season, Franchise, and Home Run Derby modes. My Player has been imported as well. In fact, when it comes to modes/presentations/gameplay, I'm not sure there's ever been a new annual sports game that was SO SIMILAR to the previous incarnation. It's nearly the same game with slightly tweaked graphics, updated rosters, and my personal favorite player, Justin Verlander, on the cover. There is a new mode — “MLB Today Season,” which is a hybrid of the Season and Today modes in which you play alongside your favorite team all year.

Maybe I'm being too hard. If I am, it's because I love baseball simulation games all the way back to “RBI Baseball.” Even if I wasn't a game critic, I'd probably buy both of these games every year just to see the differences and pick my favorites and I'm counting down the hours to the actual Opening Day this year. “The Show” has not won for me every year, unlike most critics. But this year it's a clean sweep. There are just too many glitches, too many mediocre player animations, too many frustrating elements that just can't be overlooked. I'll admit to having a good time during some games of “MLB 2K12” and forgiving fans who don't have a PS3 will enjoy parts of it. But they deserve better. Even if it is the last inning for this franchise.

'Major League Baseball 2K12' was released by 2K sports and developed by Visual Concepts. It is rated E (Everyone). The version reviewed was on the PS3, but the title is also available on the XBox 360, PS2, Nintendo DS, Nintendo Wii, and the PC. It was released on March 6th, 2012.



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