



The first installment of "The Darkness" was released on home videogame consoles and the PC in 2007. With everything pretty much new and revamped, the game's sequel, "The Darkness 2" has just been released and was developed by Digital Extremes instead of Starbreeze Studios. The story takes place two years after Jackie Estacado killed his Uncle Paulie. He now has control of the Franchetti crime family and "The Darkness" that is deep inside him. Everything seems fine until a mysterious group, known as "The Brotherhood," start causing problems for Jackie, his friends and family, and 'The Darkness.'

After playing both games, I was impressed with all of the changes that were made for "The Darkness 2." Compared to the original game, "The Darkness 2" was far superior in graphics and animation. The backgrounds looked a lot more realistic, but the actual characters were cel-shaded. Playing the game felt like I was in the same world as the movie "Scanner Darkly," which starred Keanu Reeves. It was a nice contrast and a huge improvement from the blocky characters in the first game. Also, when there was dialogue, the characters' actually moved their mouths and it did not feel like a badly dubbed Chinese movie like in the original game. The graphical issues that hindered the first game were perfectly improved in the sequel.

The music in both games were really good and added a lot to the moods of the levels and the cut scenes. They were fitting and everything sounded great on surround sound. The sound effects were realistic, but the dialogue was really vulgar and a bit over the top at times. Thankfully, this game was given an "M" rating because it was definitely not for kids. Besides the profanity, the blood and gore, and some of the stages (such as the brothel), the game had a very adult feel to it.

Another big improvement I noticed were the controls. They moved some buttons around from the original game and the controls felt a lot more natural. Another cool add-on was the "quad wielding." Besides being able to shoot two guns at once, in each hand, you also had two demon arms, which allowed you to grab with one arm and the other to swipe. You could shoot an enemy with two guns, grab him with one arm, swipe him a couple times, and then rip off his head either for more ammo or health all in one motion. You use the shoulder buttons and the triggers to control each arm and it took a bit of getting used to, but was a lot of fun to do because you were able to dispose of your enemies in so many different ways. The kills are very graphic, but creative and fun to watch.

The multiplayer aspect of the game, called Vendettas, allows you to play as one of four characters either online with friends or offline solo. I thought this was a nice break from the main story, but had a couple of issues. The first issue being how stereotypical the characters were is a bit disappointing. They have the Asian guy that is good with a sword, a Jewish blonde, a Scottish red head with a bad fake accent, and a voodoo master from New Orleans. The developers could have been a bit more conspicuous with their character choices. Also, I had a lot more fun and would have spent more time on the main story anytime as opposed to the multiplayer because the boredom set in fairly quickly.

A couple overall issues I found with the game were the AI, the length of the story, and some slowdowns. Even on easy or medium, the AI was too smart and made things a bit too difficult for me at times. It was a challenge, but I didn't know I would be up against Brotherhood thugs that seemed to be fresh out of the Navy Seals. Also, the game was way too short compared to the original game. I beat the whole game in two sittings in about 6 hours. I was left wanting more and a bit unhappy how



sudden everything concluded. Lastly, I did notice some slowdowns when there was a lot of action going on. I remember this happening at least 3 times as I was playing the main story and it caused me some frustration.

Other than the issues mentioned, this was overall a pretty good game. The presentation and the graphics were nicely done and the controls were very responsive. I would recommend this game to older gamers because I know the gore, nudity, profanity, and story might not be appropriate for younger audiences. I would play the main story again just for fun, but the multiplayer had its issues and got old really fast. For those reasons, I am giving this game a "B."

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