

## Review: 'Epic Mickey 2' builds a worse mousetrap

November 29 2012, by Lou Kesten

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This undated publicity photo provided by Disney shows Mickey Mouse using a paintbrush to fight a monster in "Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two" (Disney, for the Xbox 360, PlayStation 3, \$59.99; Wii U, \$54.99; Wii, \$49.99). (AP Photo/Disney)

While Mickey Mouse has been the face of The Walt Disney Co. for more than 80 years, I don't think he's anyone's favorite toon. The kids in my family adore Ariel, Simba and Buzz Lightyear, while I have a soft spot for Scrooge McDuck. Mickey is more corporate logo than character, the smiling figurehead at the prow of the mighty S.S. Disney.

And yet, here he is in "Epic Mickey 2: The Power of Two" (Disney, for the [Xbox 360](#), [PlayStation 3](#), \$59.99; Wii U, \$54.99; [Wii](#), \$49.99), his second high-profile video game in three years. It's the continuation of designer Warren Spector's effort to rehabilitate the rodent—and given the drab, charmless result, it's a project I'm ready to give up on.

"Epic Mickey 2" returns to the Wasteland, a decrepit world based on classic Magic Kingdom attractions like Frontierland and Adventureland. After the Wasteland is torn up by earthquakes, Mickey is summoned to help restore it—and find out what caused the disaster. The Mouse is again armed with a magical brush that can shoot paint or thinner, while his buddy, Oswald the Lucky Rabbit, carries a remote control that can harness electricity.

The most interesting puzzles here require using the brush to rebuild or destroy structures around the Wasteland. Unfortunately, Mickey also has to use paint and thinner to fight mobile enemies—a chore made frustrating by clunky controls, sloppy aiming and awkward camera angles.

Oswald isn't much help: When you need him to zap a monster, he's usually wandering aimlessly in the distance. Having another human control Oswald makes combat a little more tolerable, but he's usually extraneous and at times actually interferes with the task at hand. "Epic Mickey 2" is the latest example of a studio forcing cooperative play on an audience that wasn't asking for it.

There were moments in "Epic Mickey 2" that made me furious, which isn't the emotion I normally associate with The Happiest Place on Earth. Rather than correcting the flaws that marred the original, Spector and his team at Disney's Junction Point Studios have added more nuisances. It's enough to turn even the most mild-mannered Mickey fan into an apoplectic Donald Duck. One star out of four.

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One of the most fondly remembered video games in Disney history is 1990's "Castle of Illusion Starring Mickey Mouse," a gorgeous adventure that pushed the graphics of the Sega Genesis to new heights. The new "Epic Mickey: Power of Illusion" (Disney, for the Nintendo 3DS, \$39.99) pays tribute to that classic, but doesn't deliver quite the same magic.

Like its predecessor, "Power of Illusion" sets Mickey loose in a castle filled with monsters and traps. It's a fairly pedestrian exercise in running-and-jumping mechanics, distinguished by a gimmick that links it with "Epic Mickey 2." Again, Mickey is armed with a magic brush, which he can use to paint helpful climbing blocks or to thin out pesky obstacles by tracing them on the 3DS touchscreen.

The paint/thinner trick is cute the first few times, but becomes wearisome once you realize the developers will allow you to draw just a handful of items, which are repeated ad infinitum. Another potential highlight—a huge roster of beloved Disney characters—goes to waste because none of them does anything to help Mickey.

"Power of Illusion" is pretty, but just when it starts to get interesting, it's over—the whole adventure is only about four hours long. That's hardly epic. One-and-a-half stars.

**More information:** [disney.go.com/mickey/disney-epic-mickey-2.html](http://disney.go.com/mickey/disney-epic-mickey-2.html)

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