



Film Review MORTAL KOMBAT II

By Duncan Forbes



Mortal Kombat II is the sequel to the 2021 reboot of the fighting game adaptation. Simon McQuoid returns to direct, as do many of the cast of the original, including Hiroyuki Sanada, Tadanobu Asano, Joe Taslim, Josh Lawson, Jessica McNamee and Lewis Tan.

The first film received very mixed reviews, with most of the criticism being levelled at the focus on an original character (Lewis Tan's Cole Young), the invention of the magical "arcana" birthmarks, and the lack of an actual *Mortal Kombat* tournament. The film-makers were clearly listening to the fans, as all of those complaints are addressed in the sequel. Cole is now a minor supporting character, with two new fighters given focus – martial artist and actor Johnny Cage (Karl Urban) and Outworld princess Kitana (Adeline Rudolph). The controversial concept of "arcana" is nowhere to be found, and the entire plot of the film revolves around the tournament between Earthrealm and Outworld. Everything that was successful about the first film returns here. The characters, who were largely well-represented, continue to be an asset here. Returning combatants are given justice, with Liu Kang (Ludi Lin) and Jax (Mehcad Brooks) given much more screen time and personality



than in the 2021 movie. The new characters introduced in this film are also great, with the villain Shao Kahn (Martyn Ford) being far more imposing and active than Shang Tsung in the original, and the mutant Baraka (CJ Bloomfield), who was often little more than fodder in the games, being one of *Mortal Kombat II*'s most endearing and funny characters. Most people watching this film will be interested in one thing – the combat. In the original, it was well choreographed, but sparse, where it is the focus here. There are numerous bloody fights, many of which takes place in classic *Mortal Kombat* arenas. Fans of the

games who were disappointed by the original 2021 movie will likely be much happier with this instalment.

Of course, *Mortal Kombat II* is far from perfect. There's very little depth, to either the story or the characters, the humour is hit-and-miss, and some of the characters are massively under-utilised. Viewers who aren't fans of the games will probably enjoy this far less than those who are familiar with the source material. Simon McQuoid's *Mortal Kombat II* is no cinema classic, but if you're happy to turn your brain off and enjoy some pulse-pounding violence, you'll have little to complain about.