

## Mega Man 2

### Introduction

Mega Man 2 is one of the games that helped Capcom Inc. to become one of the largest current video game manufacturers. Capcom released the first Mega Man game in 1987, but it was not until the December 24, 1988 release in Japan and the February 10, 1989 release in the U.S. that the popularity of Mega Man really caught on. Today, Mega Man is one of the most recognizable brands in the console game business. To date, he has appeared in 35 games across 12 different platforms, including the NES, Playstation, and Dreamcast. He also has appeared in a cartoon series and sold a successful toy line based on characters from the cartoons and games.

The main designers for the eight initial stages were: Masunori Satou, Youji Kanazawa, Takashi Tanaka, Hirofumi Mizogiwa, Akira Yoshida, Tomoo Yamabu, Toshiyuki Katoka, and Masakatsu Ichikawa. All of them contributed to the design of the five final stages. The main programmer for the game was an individual that called himself HMD.

### Story Line and Game Play

The events in the story line leading up to and including Mega Man 2 are as follows. Dr. Thomas Xavier Light was the first to create a convincing, life-like humanoid robot. Using these plans, he built himself a small lab assistant that he named Rock, and a housekeeping robot named Roll. Dr. Light taught his skills to his partner and

assistant, Dr. Wily, and the two used this breakthrough to create six Robot Masters, designed to oversee non-intelligent robots in tasks too dangerous or tedious for humans. These Robot Masters all had different areas of specialty, such as Bomb Man, the demolitions mining robot. All was going well, until Dr. Wily mysteriously reprogrammed the new robots and took off with them. The next thing anyone knew, he was using the stolen robots in a massive take-over of the entire planet. Rock resisted the reprogramming and Dr. Light converted him into the warrior robot named Mega Man. The special ability that Mega Man possessed was the power to use the weaponry of any Master Robot he destroyed. Mega Man defeated each Robot Master and Dr. Wily, thus ending Wily's attempt at world domination. This is the story of the original Mega Man game.

After Mega Man stopped Dr. Wily's evil scheme, Wily did not take the defeat lightly. Instead, he constructed eight of his own Robot Masters. These robots designed purely to fight. Wily sent these out to continue his previous invasion attempt, as well as to destroy Mega Man. The blue bomber went off to save the world again. This is the story of Mega Man 2, a simple revenge plot on the part of the series villain. As a side note, after being defeated in Mega Man 2, Dr. Wily supposedly reformed his evil ways. Of course, he returned to villainy in all six of the remaining games in the original series.

Mega Man 2 is a classic example of the NES action-adventure game. This is the classification that was given to any game, like the games in the Mega Man, Mario, or Metroid series that primarily involved running, jumping, and shooting through various levels. The game play consists of battling through the eight Robot Master stages. Then, after these stages are all completed, fighting through the five Dr. Wily stages. The most

compelling aspect of any Mega Man game is that there is no set order in which the player must complete the Robot Master stages. Of course, the Dr. Wily stages always occur in a set sequence. Part of the challenge of Mega Man 2 comes from finding the optimal order to progress through the first eight stages. Certain weapons and tools gained from destroying Robot Masters will make the challenges in other stages easier. In addition, every Robot Master is particularly weak to another's weapon. Mega Man becomes incredibly versatile in the ways that he can destroy enemies in the latter stages of the game. The one catch to using the abilities of the defeated Robot Masters is that every time one is used, some of the energy of that weapon is depleted. Mega Man must find special items in order to refill the weapons energy.

The goals of Mega Man 2 are, first, to defeat the eight Robot Masters: Metal Man, Air Man, Bubble Man, Quick Man, Crash Man, Flash Man, Heat Man, and Wood Man. The weapons that Mega Man acquires when defeating the Robot Masters are, respectively: Metal Blade, Air Tornado, Bubble Lead, Quick Boomerang, Crash Bomb, Flash Stopper, Atomic Fire, and Leaf Shield. Dr. Light will give you three inventions during the course of the game: the Jet Sled, Wall Climber, and Floating Platform. The second goal, after collecting all the weapons and gadgets, is to get to Dr. Wily and defeat him. The way to achieve the goals in this game is to fight through each stage. This involves negotiating several climbing, jumping, and shooting challenges, as well as some creative uses of the various abilities you gain as the game progresses.

## Technology

The hardware that Mega Man 2 runs on is the standard NES game pak configuration plus the Nintendo MMC1 expansion chip. This provides the game with standard looking 8-bit graphics plus a few improvements. Mega Man 2 is drawn in three layers that all scroll at the same speed. There is the background layer that handles the trees or gears or whatever the background happens to be for a stage. The main layer contains Mega Man, the enemies, and the platforms and rooms of the level. The third layer is not always used, but when it is, it contains special effects such as water (drawn behind the main layer) or clouds (drawn in front of the main layer). This allowed for areas of some levels where Mega Man was obscured by clouds or lasers in the foreground.

The control is on a standard Nintendo controller. The directional pad controls walking, climbing, and navigating the weapons menu. The A button causes Mega Man to jump. The B button causes Mega Man to shoot the weapon that is currently selected. The select button causes the game to pause. The start button causes Mega Man's weapons menu to appear or disappear in order to select different weapons.

The music in the game is all played through midi compositions. While the sound itself is nothing special, the tunes of the various levels of the game are good and occupy a nostalgic place in the heart of older console gamers. There is some artificial intelligence for the enemies in the game, but it is minimal. The only other significant feature of the game is the password system, which consists of placing six dots in a six by six grid. Since Mega Man 2 is a console game, there is not too much to it except for its graphics, control interface, and sound.

## Game Design

The game design of Mega Man 2 has become the standard design for all Mega Man games to come after it. The format of Mega Man 2 is easy to learn and makes for a fun game of moderate challenge. The game does not hold a lot of strategic depth; the only strategy involved in the combat situations is to keep trying different weapons until something works. There is some strategy involved in selecting the order to tackle the levels in, but this is not as difficult as it is time consuming. The real fun of Mega Man 2 comes from playing around with the effects of different weapons on bosses, enemies, platforms, and walls; and using this knowledge to discover secrets and easier paths through a level.

Mega Man 2 has decent replay value. First off, it provides two difficulty levels, normal and hard, to play in. When the game is on hard mode, Mega Man does less damage, takes more damage, and many of the enemies have more complex attack patterns. The first time through the game, much experimentation takes place with level order. After finding the optimal level order and beating the game, there are still 40,319 ways to play through the first eight levels. Most players just stay with completing challenges such as completing the game without using any weapons other than the basic one to defeat Robot Masters. There are also several sections of the game that are very challenging without the right tools to pass them. For example, there is a grid of laser beams that flash across the screen in Quick Man stage that is tough to pass without the time stopping Flash Stopper weapon. The desire to defeat all of these challenges can result in many hours spent on this game.

### Summary of Success

As previously stated the game design of Mega Man 2, refined from the design of the original Mega Man, launched one of the most popular brands in console history. Mega Man 2 launched the general trend of a non-linear level selection in console games. Many of Capcom's adventure games for the NES and Super Nintendo used this model, such as Duck Tales and Darkwing Duck. Other Nintendo licensees soon picked up this design style as well, like Konami's Castlevania 3. Even Nintendo itself used a variation of non-linear level selection in its flagship title for the Super Nintendo, Super Mario World.

The most recent game in a spin-off Mega Man series, Mega Man X5, uses the same model of eight robot bosses and the ability to acquire all of their weapons. It is a 2D side scrolling game in the standard Mega Man tradition. The incredible thing is that this game was released on February 03, 2001. In this day and age of complex 3D environments and increasing realism, Mega Man has a strong enough fan base for Capcom to make money by releasing a relatively low-tech game. For many of these fans, the first game that hooked them on Mega Man was Mega Man 2.

## References

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Mega Man 2 Instruction Manual

Mega Man 2 Game Cartridge for Nintendo Entertainment System