

Philip – "Obviously, eventually the 16-bit machines will become the 'standard' sized console instead of the 8-bit. Already the transition is taking place as the Mega Drive sells more and more."
Lesley – "But that's not to say that Sega will abandon the Master System, just because something becomes old doesn't mean that its life is over. Just look at the Spectrum and the C64 – released almost 10 years ago, they still have a huge user-base and are seemingly as popular as ever. I think Commodore actually sold more C64s before last Christmas than in any of the last few years. No, we have no plans to reduce the number of Master System games released so there's no need to worry about the Master System becoming obsolete for a good few years yet."

Neil – "It's good to see that the prices of the Master System and the Mega Drive have been dropped. Why was this?"

Simon – "This is something that we've wanted to do for a long time. These price drops bring the Sega consoles into the affordable range of a lot more people. Price reductions from Sega themselves have finally made this possible – if we are able to secure a deal with Sega Japan that means we get the consoles cheaper, then it means that we in turn can sell them on cheaper in the shops."

"OK, so the price drops aren't too drastic, but we really believe that they are enough to encourage a whole new wave of console owners who perhaps couldn't afford to get involved before."

Neil – "Nintendo are Sega's nearest competitor, although all sales figures to date show that Sega are still well ahead. How highly do you rate the threat of Nintendo?"

Philip – "Obviously we acknowledge that Nintendo are a very powerful force. It really is a Pepsi and Coca Cola war, but one Sega will eventually win. I think we've got the edge over Nintendo in Britain for quite a few reasons."

"Firstly, we have a very good relationship with the trade in terms of distribution. Now this may not sound so earth shattering but what it means is that people are very keen to do business with Sega and sell Sega equipment. The computer industry recognise Sega's quality and commitment. I guess we're just good people to do business with."

"Secondly, we have a very aggressive and competitive pricing policy. In other words, Sega's products (especially since the price-cuts) undoubtedly offer tremendous value for money, at a price that is not out of the reach of too many people. Couple this to a very sophisticated and avant-garde marketing policy and it all adds up to a very appetising package."

"Lastly, and most importantly, I believe we have the superior products. The Mega Drive and the Game Gear beat anything that Nintendo have out at the moment."

Neil – "What about the Super Famicom?"

Lesley – "Yes, it's certainly good. But by the time it hits Britain properly Sega's 32-bit 'Giga drive' should be here too – there'll be no competition. Unfortunately, we don't have any information on the Giga Drive at the moment – all we can confirm is that yes, Sega are definitely working on it and that they should have a prototype up and running in the near future."

Philip – "Also to be considered in the battle against Nintendo is that there's a big advantage in 'getting there first'. Sega are miles ahead of Nintendo in Britain. It's a bit like when Video recorders first came over to Britain, there were two different formats that used different types of tape – VHS versus Betamax. Although both were good, Beta were doomed to failure, predominantly because VHS got more people interested in their particular format first. We believe Nintendo, in the UK at least, will probably suffer the same way. Creating a situation opposite to that which happened in the USA."

Neil – "The Game Gear's finally here – after what seems like ages of waiting. Firstly how many are you hoping to sell?"

Lesley – "Well, hopefully we want to sell 100,000 before Christmas."
Simon – "Although that sounds a lot, I don't think it's too optimistic – one of the small distributors I spoke to had over 60 calls enquiring about the Game Gear, just on one Saturday!"

Philip – "Really it's like the hype surrounding the Mega Drive launch all over again – the amount of interest it's causing is incredible. We could probably sell half our quota without advertising the Game Gear at all. People 'in the know' will buy it anyway."

Neil – "Do you think hand-held consoles will take over from personal stereos as the standard

6 of the best!



STAGE 1 "Green Hill Zone"

The adventure starts here. Trees, tunnels, waterfalls, insects, clouds and spikes decorate a scenic journey through Sonic's homeland.

STAGE 2 "Labyrinth Zone"

Sonic balances on tip-toes as he ventures underground to explore the labyrinth. Learn your route carefully as mistakes will be costly!

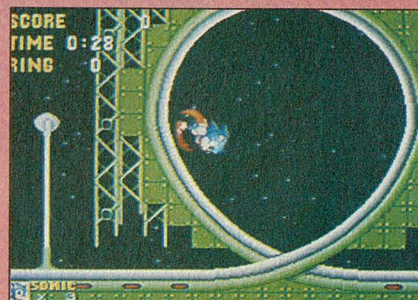


STAGE 3 "Marble Zone"

Most of the action takes place in the depths of the volcanic underground. Sonic must learn to solve puzzles if he's to escape without being burnt. Actually you can eat roast hedgehog...

STAGE 4 "Star Light Zone"

A rollercoaster dash across the rooftops of a city skyline. Sonic must build up momentum in order to leap gaps and risk looping-the-loop.



STAGE 5 "Sparkling Zone"

Our favourite! At one point, Sonic finds himself fired from a spring-loaded pad and catapulted into a giant pinball machine.

STAGE 6 "Clockwork Zone"

More gravity-defying leaps and dare-devil stunts in the last of the six standard stages. Only the special stage to face and you've finished!





Hedgehogging the limelight with Sega's spiky speed-merchant!

The 'creme de la creme', the 'piece da resistance', the 'aujhord hui' and – if you will – the 'quelle el la date de ton anniversaire?' of Sega games has finally arrived. *Sonic the Hedgehog*'s been billed as all this and more, but is it any good? This is a preview, not a review – the finished version of the game hadn't arrived from Japan so Virgin gave us a semi-complete cart instead – but the graphics and a couple of levels were complete so we think it's fair to say that yes, it should be fantastic.

The screen shots will give you some idea of the standard of the graphics – but fasten your seat-belt for the speed of the action, *Sonic* moves quicker than a chicken who's just had a friend yell 'Bernard Mathews' in his ear. The incredible thing is that one of the power-ups on offer is a pair of 'Speedy Boots' that – you've guessed it – make *Sonic* even quicker and the music (manic at the best of times) break the sound barrier.

The object of the game is to guide *Sonic* through six stages

(each of three levels) and a special bonus round. At the end of each level is a finishing post and the object of the game is to get there as quickly as possible to earn yourself a nice big juicy time bonus.

Along the way *Sonic* will also find gold rings. Not only do these earn him points, calculated by the amount he manages to cross the finishing line with, but they protect him from collisions with baddies. Baddies can be killed by bouncing on them (a la *Mickey Mouse*) but *Sonic* can survive an unexpected collision at the cost of all his rings. The rings rapidly scatter across the screen as a result of the collision and *Sonic* must frantically grab as many as he can before continuing his dash towards the finish line.

Springs, waterfalls, ramps, loop-the-loops, stoppers, ramps, jumps and puzzles all await *Sega's* 'quickly prickly' in this adventure. For the moment, check out these gorgeous screen-shots. Wait for the full *Sega Power* review as soon as we get the finished cartridge.

The special bonus round is a real feast for the eyes. The backgrounds are good enough to frame with mutating images inspired by the work of the surrealist artist M.C. Escher.



As all good hedgehogs do, in times of danger *Sonic* curls into a little ball. In this case, it's to negotiate an underground tunnel. Whirling like a band-saw, *Sonic* makes quick work of any baddies.

He's made it – pass the finishing line for a whacking great time bonus and a crack at the next level. The music is by one of Japan's pop-stars Masato Nakamura – but just try putting 'The Race' on your stereo.



companion for long train journeys?"

Lesley, Simon & Philip – "Hopefully!"

Hedgehogging the Limelight!

Neil – "Third party software houses such as *Electronic Arts* or *US Gold* can choose from their most successful home-computer titles when deciding which titles to produce for the *Sega*. Who decides which *Sega* games to develop?"

Simon – "Well, *Sega Japan* obviously choose the games they're going to develop – whether it be a coin-op conversion, a film license or whatever. But us lot in the UK, we also have quite a bit of influence. Obviously we know what's going on over here better than they do in Japan, so they listen to us if we reckon there's a really hot license up for grabs. Sometimes we can tell just what sort of game will succeed at certain times – often Japan then bear this in mind."

Lesley – "Then, once they've decided which game to design, *Sega's* huge research and development team get called in to actually turn it from an idea into a cartridge. Almost a quarter of all *Sega's* Japanese staff are involved in the research and design departments. *Sega* really value careful planning, and so invest a lot to make sure that their products are designed to perfection. Hence the motto 'Creativity is Life'.

Neil – "*Sonic the Hedgehog* – *Sega Power* readers are getting their first glimpse this issue. On first glance it looks incredible. Is it going to be as completely mind-boggling as everyone reckons it will be?"

Philip – "Yeah, I expect so. Quite frankly I think it's the best console game ever produced! He's fast, furious cool and cute at the same time."

(Unanimous agreement from the Virgin team!)

Neil – "I suppose the *Mega Drive* needed an identifiable character – the *Master System* always had *Alex Kidd* and *Wonderboy* – but the *Mega Drive* so far hasn't had a single, 'classic' character for its own. Is *Sonic* the character that will now accompany the *Mega Drive* into everyone's homes, much as *Super Mario Bros* has really gone hand in hand with *Nintendo* throughout its rise in the USA?"

Philip – "Yes, obviously we want *Sonic* to be a huge success – and to a large extent he was designed to directly challenge *Mario*. But we don't want to be dependent on just one game, we'd rather attract people with a whole range of games as opposed to just the one."

"Having said that, it is true to say that *Sega* did make a special effort with *Sonic*. When *Sega's* best development team were assembled and briefed, they were told they had six months to a year to make the best video game ever produced. All of *Sega's* finest designers, programmers and game-players were involved to try and make *Sonic the Hedgehog* extra special. And it's worked, we reckon *Sonic* makes *Mario's* plumber look like the *Muppet Show*."

Lesley – "Don't think that *Sonic* was 'just another' game that happened to turn out better than expected, *Sega* always knew it would be fantastic."

Simon – "The great thing about *Sonic* as opposed to, say, *Z* – although they're both very good games – is that *Sonic* is *Sega's* own character and so it's a lot more flexible – the possibilities are endless."

Neil – "So does that mean will there be other *Sonic* games?"

Simon – "Of course! But we'll have to wait and see how many copies of the original we sell first."

Neil – "So cartoons, gimmicks and so on *Super Mario*-style aren't out of the question?"

Philip – "I don't see any reason why not, but we're not promising anything. You'll have to wait and see..."

In next month's *Sega Power*, *Neil* once again bravely puts on his interview hat for the first in a series of features on the people who actually make the games – the wheeling, dealing employees of the software houses. ■

