

*The battle of the consoles is over, but the fight between Sega and Nintendo has only just begun. In one corner, Sonic sharpens his spines, in the other, Mario casually waxes his moustache without a worry. What will be the outcome?*

**E**ver since the dawning of Nintendo, Mario and Luigi, those cheerful plumbers, once in the guise of cement factory workers and at other times virtually anything else you can think of, have been storming across NES units.



Having waged war on Nintendo, Sega has a lot to live up to. Its 16-bit console, the Megadrive, aka Genesis, is the only console to properly compete with the Famicom, and also has the added bonus of being officially released in the UK already



Mario's style of graphics are vastly different from that of Sonic, and the Nintendo game has opted for a clean, crisp appearance instead of intricately designed levels

# Sonic Versus Mario

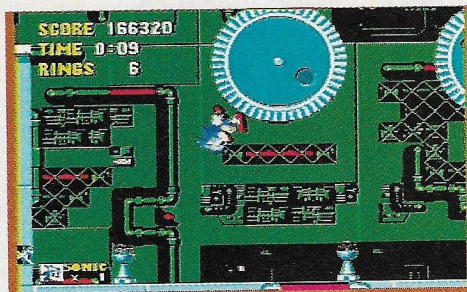
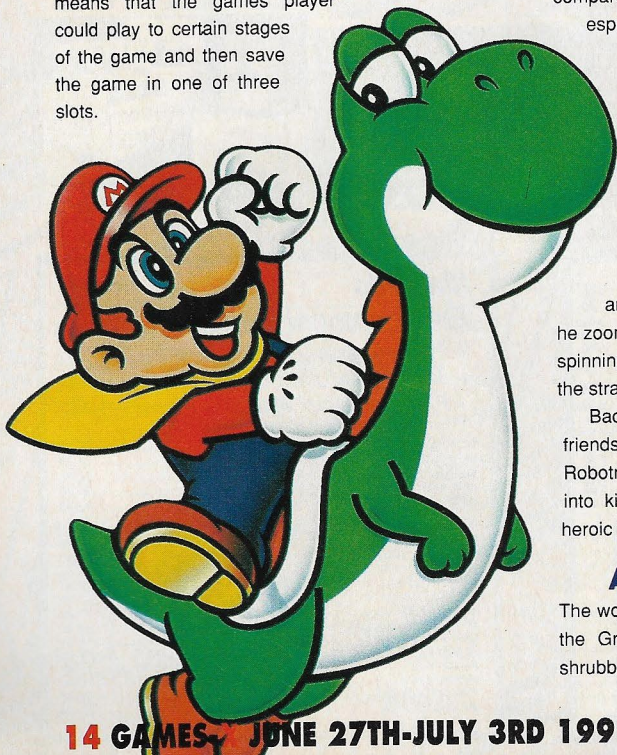
The dynamic duo made their first appearance in the arcades about a decade ago, and pitted the skills of the player against the brute force of Donkey Kong.

Their latest escapade, Super Mario World on the Super Famicom, is arguably the most playable platform game on the market across all formats. However, Sega has spent years developing the game to counter-attack Mario's success, Sonic the Hedgehog.

## VAST EXPANSES

For those of you who haven't had the privilege of playing Super Mario World, it is a cute platform romp of immense proportions – over 90 levels in all. Sonic, on the other hand, offers a mere 18, although they are bigger in size and span great lengths in both height and width.

With such an enormous task ahead of you, the rewritable EPROM cartridge that Mario is supplied on means that the games player could play to certain stages of the game and then save the game in one of three slots.



Once again Sonic's Power Sneakers™ have proved indispensable as he runs around the cog-like wheels to make his way to Robotnik's lair

Unfortunately Sonic doesn't have a similar option, although a number of continue credits can be earned by completing the special bonus levels.

The overall image of Sega's Sonic is minute compared to the enormity of the Mario character, especially in the States. Nintendo's Mario has had cartoons, crisps, candy bars, kiddies clothes, toys and even a film based on him, and is now considered somewhat of a cult character.

One of the most appealing features of both of the games is the characterization of both Sonic and Mario. Mario, an ageing Italian, is instantly likeable due to the way he is perfectly animated in all of his games.

Sonic, a frowning hedgehog out to save his animal friends, is humorously created by the way he zooms around the intricately designed levels, his legs spinning ten-to-the-dozen and his eyes bulging under the strain of supersonic travel!

Back to Sonic, the plot is one of liberation. Your friends have been animal-napped by the evil Doctor Robotnik. He has transformed Sonic's bush-buddies into killer 'bots which roam the eight lands that our heroic hedgehog must explore.

## A WHOLE IMAGINATION OF WORLDS

The worlds that Sonic will visit are as follows. The first is the Green Hill zone, a blooming land of trees and shrubbery. Next, the Marble zone, is a place where the

action takes place underground as well as above.

The Spring Yard zone places Sonic as a furry ball inside a huge pinball machine which will throw him through the air and around a complex pattern of 'bouncers'.

Another underground network 'level' four is the

### THE GREEN HILL ZONE



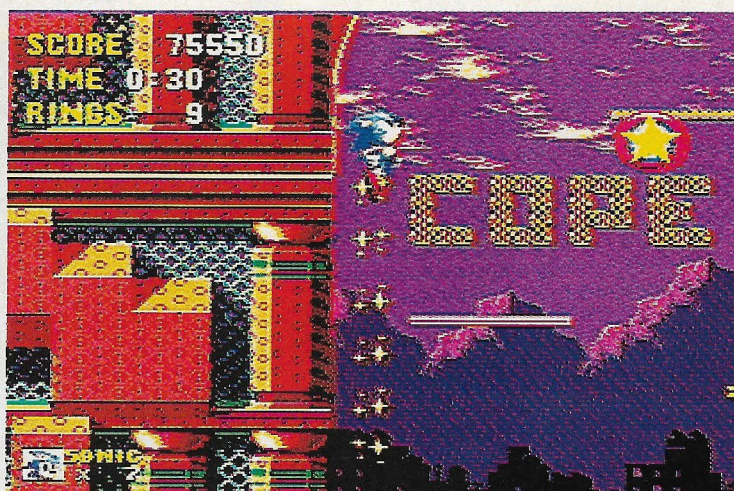
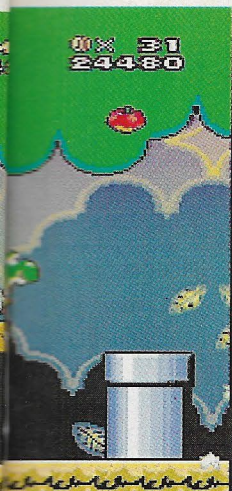
### THE MARBLE ZONE



### THE SPRING YARD







Whereas Mario concentrates on playability, it seems Sonic the Hedgehog's emphasis is on speed. I mean, you don't see Mario zooming around a pinball level with a line of stars trailing behind, do you?

# Mario

Labyrinth. Level five is the Starlight zone and is equivalent to riding a corkscrew roller coaster through space. Finally the Scrap Brain zone is a space age area with Dr Robotnik's hide-out just a single step away.

These worlds differ in the way they are laid out, as well as the monsters that will attack our masterful

## THE LABYRINTH



## THE STARLIGHT ZONE



## THE SCRAP BRAIN ZONE



mammal. For instance, the Spring Yard is, suprisingly enough, a level comprised of platforms and moving blocks, with the only clear path through being by using the red and yellow spring-boards which propel the character at tremendous pace.

Most hedgehogs use their spines as defence but Sonic, being as 'ard as nails, uses them to spike his enemies and turn them back into the forest dwellers they once were.

Control over Mario requires the use of all your digits because the four coloured buttons are used to control the character's actions – including jumping, running and picking up objects – and the directional pad serves to move him.

Sonic on the other hand only has one use for the three buttons on the Mega Drive joypad – the Super Sonic Spin attack! The d-pad controls the hedgehog's movement, and can also make him roll into a ball by running along and tapping down.

## DOUBLE VISION

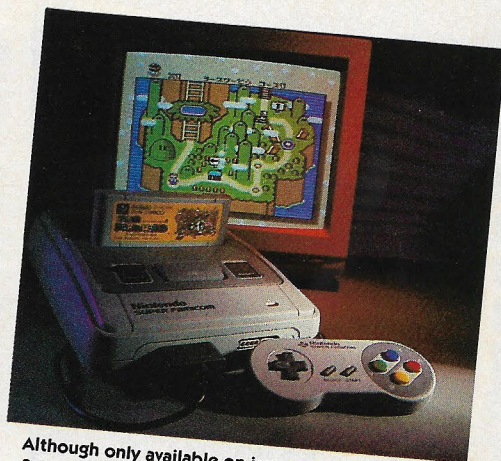
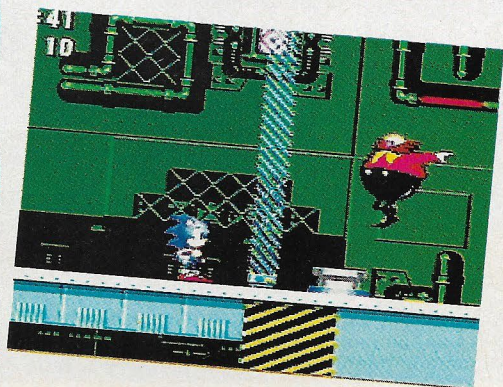
The two games are similar in a number of ways, one of which being the inclusion of a special bonus level. To gain access to these extra screens you have to collect a certain number of items.

Mario has to pick up a hundred stars, and Sonic must collect a large quantity of rings, as well as leaping through a huge golden hoop at the end of a level.

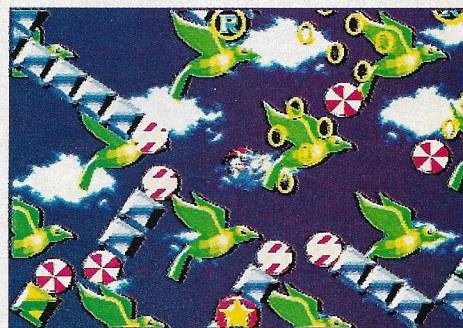
In Mario, the extra level is similar to a rotating fruit-machine, with one-ups being the prize. Glass cases circle a static power-up. Inside the spinning boxes more bonuses cycle through the various power-ups, and the basic gist is to match the icons together.

Sonic's secret zone is a 360 rotating maze where you must ricochet through the network in an attempt to collect the Chaos gem. Extra lives and continue options can be collected by simply touching the corresponding block, and Sonic can even change the direction of the spinning maze by brushing against the tunnel walls.

Those who have played Super Mario world will most



Although only available on import at the moment, the Super Famicom looks as if it will storm the market when officially released as the Super NES for around a £100



If you manage to collect enough coins on the previous level, you'll have the chance to enter the bonus screen. Simply collect the coins for extra continues

probably know about the numerous secret levels that can be found. These are usually located by accident, and are activated by inserting a huge gold key into the relevant keyhole.

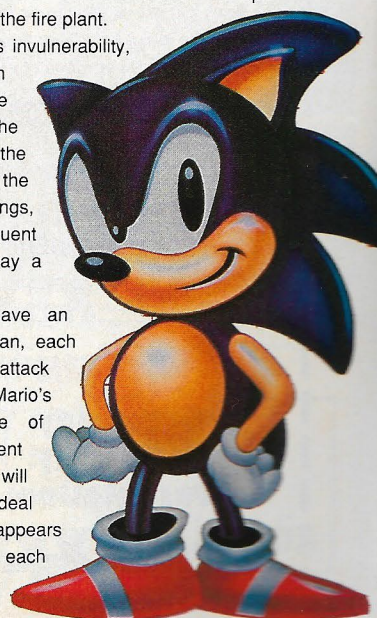
This will open up a new path for Mario or Luigi to follow. Sonic also has secret sections to find, these being invisible pathways hidden in brick walls. Although they are simply rooms, they offer a new dimension to the game and you'll be trying to locate these concealed chambers even after you've completed the game!

Both of the products have their fair share of power-ups. To boost Sonic's capabilities he can collect a shield which prevents you from losing your rings when attacked. The Power Sneakers™ give you the ability to run at supersonic speeds, and the invincible icon makes Sonic invulnerable for a limited period.

Mario has more at his disposal, and can ride dinosaurs, fly with the aid of feathers and even spit flames by collecting the fire plant.

The star awards invulnerability, and the mushroom is equivalent to the rings in Sonic – the first hit will remove the safeguard, either the mushroom or the rings, and any subsequent attack will take away a life.

Both games have an end of level guardian, each with a particular attack pattern to learn. Mario's guardians comprise of numerous different nasties, but Sonic will have to constantly deal with Robotnik who appears with a new weapon each time.







# FACT FILE

Software house: **Sega**  
Development team: **The Sonic Team**

## John's comment.

Can Sonic take on the Nintendo hero? Well he's definitely cuter isn't he? The game itself is colourful and incredibly fast, making it more impressive to look at than the young Italian lads.

Unfortunately our spiky friend doesn't give you as much gameplay as Mario, so you could find yourself exhausting all of the possibilities.

Overall, I think Mario still has the edge in terms of playability but I can't help thinking that future incarnations of Sonic will be increasingly wonderful. We shall see!

## Nick's comment

So this is Sonic? It's probably the best looking game I've ever seen on the Mega Drive. In fact, it knocks spots off of those two Italian chaps. However, having played the game myself and witnessed Alex 'call me Sonic' Simmons complete it, I'd have to question the longevity.

I would say the Mario Brothers still have the edge. Then again, those darn Italians have had four different adventures and if Sonic this good on his first outing, just imagine how good he's going to look on his fourth anniversary!

## Alex's comment

First appearances will make you think that Mario hasn't got a leg to stand on, but it's only when you begin to play the game that you realise the game fails on a few gripes.

I don't expect to purchase a game for £40 and complete it in under two days. My second moan is although the graphics are stunning, the gameplay has been forgotten somewhat.

Don't get me wrong, Sonic is by far the best game on the Mega Drive, but Sega have a lesson to learn from Mario in terms of playability.

## SONIC THE HEDGEHOG

Gameplay: **16/20**

Lastability: **13/20**

Presentation: **19/20**

X-RATING: **XXXXXX**

## SUPER MARIO WORLD

Gameplay: **19/20**

Lastability: **19/20**

Presentation: **18/20**

X-RATING: **XXXXXX**

# RAMPAGING ROBOTNIK



The evil Dr Robotnik first appears in a small shuttlecraft with a ball swinging from the end of a chain



With only two ledges preventing him from being fried alive, Sonic must hit the Doctor and at the same time avoid the fire he spits



A thin ledge provides the battleground for level three, with Robotnik attempting to remove the blocks from under your sneakers



The Starlight zone throws sonic on a spaceage roller coaster, and he must use the see-saws to throw himself or the balls at the Doctor's craft



The last battle. If you manage to get here I'll let you work out the attack strategy for yourself!



Motobeetle: the spines on this beast's back make him invulnerable to attack



Roller: appearing in the Spring Yard, the Roller chases Sonic in an hectic chase



Ball Hog: only seen on the last level, the Ball Hog throws bomb in an attempt to kill Sonic



Buzz Bomber: flies around the early levels and attacks with its sting



CaterKiller: although looking fairly harmless, the only weak spot is the head



Chopper: springs from mountain springs trying to maim our Hedgehog



Crab Meat: easy to destroy, the Crab Meat occasionally launches bombs



Shield: protects Sonic from losing his rings



Power Sneakers™: provide Sonic with extra speed



Invincible: does just what it says



1-up: gives you an extra Sonic



Rings: awards you with 10 more rings



Bouncer: throws our hero around the bonus level



Goal: one of the ways to exit the special sections



Reverse: change the rotational direction of the maze



Up/down: either increases or decreases the speed of the maze