

# Sonic the Hedgehog



Games-players all over the world have been waiting with baited breath, but is this *really* the best game ever? Sega Power thinks it's time to put Sonic through his paces...



The twisting, turning, spiralling 'Special Stage', where every clever hedgehog wants to be. If Sonic is going to succeed in his adventure, he'll need as many lives as he can get. This is the place to find them, along with continues, and - most importantly - the 'Chaos Emeralds'.

Here he is, *Sonic the Hedgehog*, in the Mega Drive spectacular that Sega themselves rate as the best game ever. Hailed as their 'Mario-beater', Sega had *Sonic* up and running versus Nintendo's *Super Mario Bros.* at the recent Consumer Electronics Show in Chicago. This clash of the pixillated titans resulted in no undisputed champion, but Sega remain confident. With *Sonic*, Sega hope to end the battle between the two console giants, leaving Sega as the kings of the console world.

But is *Sonic the Hedgehog* truly a world-beater? Or is the spiky speed-merchant really just a load of hog-woosh? *Sonic* marks the start of what Sega are describing as the 'second wave' of Mega Drive games. The principle is that after a console has been around for a couple of years, the games designers and programmers have

a better idea of the machine's strengths and weaknesses. Building on the techniques used in existing games, new releases benefit from a much greater understanding of the console's abilities. *Sonic* has had the whole of the computer game's industry waiting with baited breath.

*Sonic the Hedgehog* is essentially a six stage platform adventure, pitting Sonic against all that the evil Dr. Robotnik can chuck at him. Each stage throws our prickly pal into a different environment, and each stage has three levels to complete. Sonic attempts to collect gold rings along the way, hindered by the robot monsters of the evil Doctor.

The monsters are, in fact, Sonic's woodland chums who have been temporarily turned 'to the dark side' (as they say) by Dr. Robotnik. When Sonic jumps, he curls into a spiky ball that protects him from most of the dangers he'll

encounter. Bouncing on the monsters rescues the furry little creature inside, the robot shell is destroyed and the imprisoned fur-ball skips to freedom.

Sounds like any other platform adventure? Wait 'till you play it - the speed is breathtaking. The instruction manual advises finishing each level as quickly as possible, but don't be fooled. A sprint to the finishing line may well earn a huge time bonus, but the *real* secret of *Sonic* lies in collecting lots and lots of rings...

Collected rings provide a partial defence against the monsters. If Sonic collides with a baddie, he drops his rings. While the rings scatter away, a temporarily stunned Sonic is left to grab as many as he can before resuming his race to the finish line. Collide with a baddie carrying no rings, and Sonic's history. Collect a hundred rings and Sonic wins himself an extra life. Cross the



End of the first level! Sonic's collected 108 rings - enough to enter the 'Special Stage'. Quick! Jump through the big gold ring!

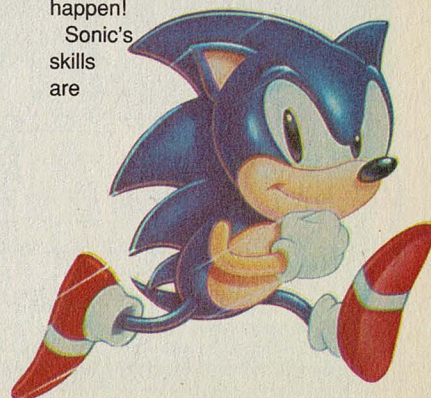


Disaster! It's all going horribly wrong for our prickly pal as Sonic inadvertently jumps on a spike and his rings scatter away.

finishing line with enough rings and Sonic is transported to the 'Secret Zone'. Useful, eh?

The 'Secret Zone' is a highly rewarding bonus level. Here Sonic can easily (after a *little* practice) earn extra lives, loadsa points and - most importantly - continues. Also up for grabs are the 'Chaos Emeralds'. Collect all six and... Well, even we haven't been able to do that yet, so who knows what will happen!

Sonic's skills are





stretched to the limit as each stage presents different challenges. Speed is of the essence if Sonic is to leap ravines and cliffs, but underwater survival rests on Sonic's ability to gauge jumps to pinpoint accuracy. Sometimes Sonic will have to risk all and leap into unknown space. Sometimes careful mapping and planning is of paramount importance. One thing is for sure – Sonic's quest is not as straightforward as it may at first appear.

## "The real secret of Sonic lies in collecting lots of gold rings"

At the end of each third level, Dr. Robotnik flies on for an end-of-stage skirmish. His craft is a strange one, but comes complete with six different accessories for hedgehog bashing. The Boss sequences are actually quite easy, once the pattern of attack has been



**Super-Sonic! An invincibility shield protects Sonic on stage three.**

calculated. But be prepared for the marathon climb upwards, racing against the rising tide, that marks the end-of-stage challenge in 'Labyrinth Zone'. Sonic has to keep his head above water if he is to reach the safety of the surface. Be warned, it's tough!

Power-ups can be collected along the way, as well as rings. Contained in TV monitors, bonuses are only a spin attack away. There are five different kinds: a Super-Ring awards Sonic ten extra rings; the Shield allows Sonic to survive one hit without losing his rings; Power Sneakers make Sonic – unbelievable though it may sound – even *faster*; Invincible surrounds



**Boooo! It's Dr. Robotnik at the end of stage battle. Jump Sonic!**

Sonic in a glowing power-shield, protecting him from most (but by no means all!) of the baddies; and One-Up awards Sonic – you've guessed it – an extra life.

Learn how to best utilise each power-up for maximum benefit. For example, some objects can only be collected after a jump beyond the reach of a conventional Sonic. But wearing the 'Power-Sneakers' the impossible suddenly becomes possible. The game won't give you these solutions on a plate – it's up to you to explore and learn.

*Sonic the Hedgehog* can be completed without coming close to exploring all that it has to offer. Finish the game without collecting

all six Chaos Emeralds and you realise that the real challenge has only just begun.

## THE VERDICT

*Sonic the Hedgehog* is the best Mega Drive game yet. Sega have pulled out all the stops and let lose the fastest, most colourful and most entertaining roller-coaster game we've ever seen.

**"Do believe the hype – a landmark in video-game history"**

Graphically, *Sonic* sets new standards. The multi-layer parallax scrolling, the speed of the action and the incredible attention to detail combine to create a real feast for the eyes. Each stage is a whole new world – with more detail crammed into just one level than most games offer in their entirety. Just try counting all the different

## Jumps, swings, traps and catapults!



The heat is on as Sonic hitches a lift in the volcanic underground 'Marble Zone'. Boulders float, but hedgehogs don't – be careful!



If Sonic stands on that plunger, then the spikes lift out of the way. But if Sonic has to keep standing on the plunger, how can he continue his adventure? Hmm. Can you work out a solution...?



See-saws can help Sonic go up in the world, but it may take a few catapultation (!? – Ed.) routines to gain enough height.



Sonic may well be the king of the swingers, but he's still got to time his jumps properly. One false move and spikes meet spikes. Ow! This time, he had no rings to protect him... Bye-bye Sonic!





## Underwater aqua-batics



'Labyrinth Zone' is where Sega's game designers, graphic artists and musicians have really gone to town. Here Sonic must regularly grab air bubbles if he's to survive. Sonic moves as if he's wading through treacle and his jumps have to be timed with even more precision.



Woooahhh! Sonic finds himself caught in a current and there's no stopping him!



Hang on! Swept along by an underwater river, Sonic must edge his way down the bar so that when he releases his grip he'll miss the spikes.

expressions on Sonic's face – you're going to be impressed.

Sonic himself moves better than any other game character we've seen. The speed and cartoon-style animation (his legs keep whirling even in mid-air!) linked to the use of 'real' gravity combine to create a remarkably realistic and entertaining ride. Loops, bends, dips, climbs, ramps, springs, jumps and swings – all are handled with fantastic attention to detail.

The soundtrack is simply superb. The main theme is re-mixed for each level, with some fantastic spot-effect variations. Wait 'til Sonic almost runs out of air underwater, or when Sonic grabs a power-up, or when Sonic dies...

OK, let's pick faults. As soon as Sonic arrived at the **Sega Power** offices it was played solidly for two days – 9am until about 7pm. On the second day we finished the game for the first time. Now we reckon that we're good games players, but it could be argued that *Sonic* is a bit on the easy side.

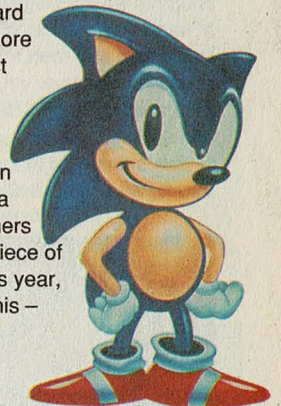
However, in *Sonic's* defence, it can also be argued that the challenge doesn't end once you've merely completed all the levels. Finishing with all six Chaos Emeralds is a different matter altogether. Couple this to point-grabbing contests, races against your friends and the exploration of all the secret rooms, tunnels and passageways off Sonic's beaten

track and you'll find yourself still addicted long after Dr. Robotnik has been beaten.

Secondly, you could argue that there simply isn't enough depth in the gameplay to make Sonic truly a world beater. **Sega Power** don't agree. Different games players will play *Sonic* with differing techniques, getting different reward from the same game. Shoot-em-up addicts will thrill to the speed of the action, platform-adventure freaks will appreciate the complexity and detail of Sonic's environment. *Sonic the Hedgehog* puts you in the hot-seat of a roller-coaster ride set to become a landmark in the history of video games.

Do believe the hype – this is the

tidiest, smoothest and most exhilarating game you'll have ever seen. If Sega maintain this new standard of releases, then we can all wave 'bye-bye' to Mario, and look forward to even more of the best games in the world. If **Sega Power** can offer Mega Drive owners just one piece of advice this year, then it's this – buy it! ■



### KEY'S GRAPHICS & SOUND

Words haven't been invented yet to describe this game. Fantastic? Brilliant? Unbelievable? Oh I know – Indescribable – that'll do. The pace of the action is incredible, the attention to detail and degree of complexity mind-boggling. The soundtrack is subtly tailored to accompany the action to perfection. Now we know what the Mega Drive is capable of, let's look forward to more of the same.

**Graphics 97%**  
**Sound 93%**

### NEIL'S DEPTH & ADDICTION

*Sonic* is great fun to play, with a dreamy control mechanism that will appeal to games players of all ages – all his movements are controlled with just the one button. The gameplay is monstrously addictive, you'll be glued to this game until you've finished it. Even if you manage to complete all the levels, collecting all six Chaos Emeralds is a different proposition altogether. Fantastic stuff, the best yet!

**Depth 92%**  
**Addiction 94%**

### ANDY'S OVERALL

Simply the best – *Sonic* scores higher than any other game we've ever reviewed. This is one game that no Mega Drive owner should be without. No matter what your personal preferences, *Sonic* will impress, thrill and amuse you. If you're a Master System owner, then by a Mega Drive just for this!

