

Hello, this is Frippami, former member of the Sonic.exe community.

Maybe it's too little too late, but I want to clarify some things about my departure from the community, and yes, a lot of this is going to relate to NEO, my retake of Sonic.exe.

I know we are ultimately talking about a niche character who has lost the staying power it once had, but I want to be honest about where my feelings lie on this, not only due to the edits to his wiki page I've had to oversee on and off over these past few years, but also for genuine fans of the character to ruminate on.

So, here's a really long winded explanation as to what's been going on with NEO and I, over these past few years:

Why did you change NEO so much?

Contrary to the multitude of public designs, NEO is a character whose story was decided from the beginning, and evolved pretty naturally. When I realized I wanted him to be something more than a generic Sonic.exe retake, I had a pretty clear direction in mind, but it put me in a very difficult position as to where to take him artistically while also satisfying his fanbase.

I was fundamentally working on something I felt had room for improvement and could grow beyond being a simple re-take of a shitty creepypasta while also sharing much of this process publicly, and yet NEO was something fans loved for the very fact it WAS tied to Sonic.exe, and very much for aspects I personally perceived to be mediocre or, not actually improving on Sonic.exe in a meaningful way.

I had pretty large members of the community at the time, like Gardenman just publicly share fanart that's aim was to compartmentalize the different designs I showed off and say they were entirely different characters because he personally wasn't happy with the direction things were going.



(Drawn by Randy/Gardenman, creator of Sonic.RAW. He is a shotacon. I wouldn't go searching if I were you.)

I personally found this frustrating, because even if you do prefer one design over the other, which is entirely valid, it was clear to me no one thought to question the story behind the design, or why I made the changes I did, and it led to a repeated feeling of not having much agency over my creation.

This is just one example, but on a larger scale, I felt a fervent passion surrounding my character, and simultaneously a blatant disregard for my vision as an artist growing more nuanced and complicated.

I felt I was trapped between my ambition, and having to appease people who wanted a very specific thing from me, even if it never fit what I wanted to do in the first place.

To explain the situation more simply, I feel the story I created for NEO behind the curtain was held back by the design and how people, including myself, generally perceive Sonic.exe as a concept... but I also don't want to appear smug about

this, or shame anyone who enjoys the original design, because even to this day, I do like aspects of it myself. I also don't want to give the impression most of the redesigns were squarely improvements, or even good, because I don't really like most of NEO's public designs... but there's a complicated story behind this.

I always wanted NEO to be more than his design, and in fact, in many of the later iterations I wrote of his story; the "Sonic" design was actually quite incidental. Many exes are focused on their transformation, or their appearance, or the fact that they're posing as another character... and that's what much of the community focuses on in what I believe to be a somewhat formulaic fashion. Even from the start, I wanted NEO to be something else. It may not seem like it, but that tidbit on the wiki, 'his story is only stated to be under wraps by the creator'... was something I wrote for the page years ago. I always had a story to tell, and yet people got so attached to a design I hadn't even shared more than trivia bullet points about despite having larger context surrounding it, that it felt like people's perception of the character began to slip from my hands entirely; that no matter what I did, people wouldn't be happy unless it was a reread of Sonic.exe. I understand that as an artist posting something so derivative to the internet, this is something you often just have to accept, but when people's expectations build so much that they get attached to a design that doesn't even have a proper context surrounding it publicly, it puts me in a very strange position as to how to proceed, especially when I did have many plans for the character and how he would be depicted.

It's just that these plans quickly strayed further and further from 'Sonic.exe', so much so that NEO even appearing as Sonic became a point of contention for me.

Behind the scenes, I loved working on NEO for the story I never got to show to anyone more than anything, and the constant evolution I was experiencing as an artist and writer, yet the design, especially in relation to the ideas I was trying to convey... was what seemed to grab people despite all the flaws I perceived it to have. While I understand the appeal of the original design by this point and earnestly appreciate the passion surrounding it as I already stated, I still don't think it fit the story I wanted to tell... and still want to tell; and I also didn't want to compromise that story just to appease people.

So, I want to make something clear; NEO's changes in design were not actually due to a lack of a coherent vision, the constant face-lifts were actually due to the

fact I recognized how much people liked the design, but also the fact that it had no place in the story I was creating anymore. This fact has changed somewhat, due to the belated creation of 'Nehoggu', but at any point before that this felt like a betrayal to my audience, so while behind the scenes, I was very proud of what I was creating; I felt fans of the original design would end up very unsatisfied. So, I desperately tried to give NEO's 'exe' design a purpose while everything else I wrote grew beyond it. That's why it seemed 'aimless'.

Nightmare X was my attempt to compartmentalize NEO state as a exe into it's own character separate from everything else I had already written for him, but it may be clear that many of these attempts did not have the same quality or passion... because they simply didn't.

To further clarify, I never shared the actual story behind the original NEO, because I wanted it to be experienced. Some of the lore was leaked at one point due to his presence in the VS. Sonic.exe roster (which is rather outdated now either way) and I demanded this to be removed from the wiki. I feel more immature and closeminded members of the fandom may view this as gatekeeping, but I do wonder how others would feel if lore they wrote for a story that they kept entirely private was leaked simply because people have an obsession with your character's inclusion in a supplementary mod and the assets from it. The leak culture that bled in from FNF and obsession surrounding the exe communities characters is one of the biggest things that turned me away and killed my motivation. I never made NEO just to milk him for content, and admittedly I wasn't prepared for the reception he received at the time in regards to all of this. His inclusion in the VS Sonic.exe FNF mod was mostly because I was friends with many of the devs and I had seen it as a fun thing to participate in, not this cultural phenomenon that was gonna take YouTube by storm, so I hope it can be understood if I became a bit reclusive and frustrated after that, especially since it seemed like the interest in NEO mostly seemed to shift towards the idea of him receiving some kind of FNF content and not an actual story. I was here before Sonic.exe had any link to the FNF community, so it was a pretty massive change for me.

It's partially my fault for playing into this so much. I was literally directing a mod that NEO was going to be a part of, but I suppose at the time I was less disillusioned. I still think a mod for NEO could've been cool if done right, and I always imagined it as a way to give more insight on what the hell he even is without spoiling everything... But unfortunately, it just never really panned out

that way. I'm not a great director, especially for a Rhythm Game that I don't even play.

Why did you leave?

One of my last meaningful interactions with this community was someone who I will not name for the sake of not having to deal with more bullshit, inserting NEO into a FNF mod without my knowledge, me trying to be cordial about it in private and allow it despite my misgivings with not being contacted, and then eventually, me trying to pull the character shortly after finding out the creator used several other exes without permission: only stating I'd be comfortable with NEO's inclusion if they told the creator of each exe they were being used. I honestly didn't want NEO in the mod at all, but I was trying to maintain some good will with the community and give the people working on the mod the benefit of the doubt, that they would do the right thing if presented the opportunity. Unfortunately, they didn't, and actively refused. This altercation led to the creator of the mod to publically harass and insult me for being transgender and overall just disregarding my feelings on the matter when I decided to make a short QRT to footage of their mod about the situation. I wasn't even a particularly big creator at that point, but it felt like as I had described here, the character getting out of my hands, nobody caring what he would become, and using it as an avenue to blatantly disrespect me, it came to pass exactly as I envisioned it.

At that point, I felt fed up with having a public presence, and I didn't want to share my art until I was sure it was in a state I was comfortable with it being shown to the public. This was to prevent another situation of my creation getting so incredibly out of my hands. This has contributed largely to my absence, as I feel I haven't had anything meaningful to show, that, or nothing I feel I can show yet without people misconstruing it. I will elaborate about this later in the doc.

I'm not gonna pretend like my PR was amazing, or I made it entirely clear what my intention with the character was ultimately, but there were many instances where I felt blatantly disrespected. I think being attacked for my identity just because I wanted a guy to respect artists is pretty shit, and while it doesn't reflect the community as a whole as tons of people came out of the woodworks to support me, I still just didn't have the patience anymore.

I don't think the culture surrounding these Sonic.exe characters should be as serious or gatekeepy as it is at this point, and maybe I should have loosened up

abit, especially for the creations that have absolutely exploded in popularity, but on the other side of the coin I can't help but think people should be less cruel and Dickish to smaller creators who maybe want some agency over what they're doing. It's more of a respect thing, and I simply didn't feel respected. My creation was just being milked for clout more or less.

I respect all those who asked me for permission to include NEO in their mods and listened to me when I said no. I think it should say something that the majority of community members, even if they did pester me a bit, would always respect my answer.

Why won't you give NEO to fans to continue his legacy?

To build off of everything I've said, it's because I don't think fans understand what he was supposed to be, and that's largely my fault for keeping his story so close to me. I've had many people offer me to take him off my hands, even some popular members of the community, but it feels somewhat pointless when it would just be turned back into the story everyone has already heard, or suffer the same fate of many other exes and just become fodder for FNF.

I guess part of it is the integrity; I would rather his story get told in the way I imagined it or not at all, although it is slightly more complicated than that, since it's not like I think literally no one in the world but me could do him justice.

I just can't help but feel if I gave NEO up to some random he'd end up as another Starved, Chaotix, etc, with a billion different retakes and a story and design that contradicts his original direction. I know this is ironic of me to say because of how many designs I shared of him publically that seemingly had no point, but I do mean it when I say, and this may be a surprise, that some of the original concepts I wrote for NEO still have a presence in my current work. It's why giving him up is so complicated to me.

Do I just give the design up, and let people ride off a name I created, despite everything I've been working on building on those original ideas?

To the public, NEO is just another Sonic.exe, but to me, and even my colleagues, he became so much more than that. Anytime I've even considered giving NEO up, he would have to be entirely stripped of his story in the process, because I'm still using it. So what would be the point, other than to allow him to be something

he's not for the sake of appeasing people who want to see him again in any capacity?

Instead of caring about my image, I decided to silently work. Life is tumultuous, so things are slow, but even through all this time, I've been dedicated to making what I want to make ultimately. I distanced myself from the fandom because I was tired of worrying how they'd receive the new direction in relation to NEO's original concepts, because the false impression of what he is seemingly became so powerful, that it would eclipse anything further I could do here. Again, that's largely my fault for not giving a good idea of what he was supposed to be, but that's also why I haven't been talking about anything I'm doing. I just want it to be complete and presentable so this kind of thing doesn't happen again.

So, why are you here?

I wanted to give fans of the character closure on what's been going on with NEO, no matter how small that audience may be at this point. I've run into fans on twitter who are still drawing him for fun, and I even saw a retake of him on the wiki. Their passion and dedication to something so old I created makes me happy; so it's only fair that in some small way, I give back. I wanted to try to build an amicable bridge back to the community, and even if I don't post as much or have an audience, I wanted it to be understood where I stand on all this. I hold no real ill will towards the community, or fans of the character, just the bad actors who turned me away from wanting to be involved around here in the first place.

I want to make it clear that while I am critical of many creations in this community, even including my own, seeing people care for something I made so long ago is something I truly cherish. It makes me feel... warm. I really can't express what that interest and support means to me other than.. For the time being, writing all this to show that it's been on my mind despite it all.

For a long time now, I have been wondering how I can truly make a compelling send off to NEO as a character beyond just continuing to work on what I have been for basically years, and I'm not sure when and how it will happen just yet, but it's something I've had a continued interest in doing. I don't want to make any promises, especially considering where I am in life right now, but at the very least, I want the door to be left open rather than locked tight.

If you read to the end, thank you.