

Sonic Forces is a Terrible Game and I Love It

Sonic Forces has me in a dilemma. I want to tell you how much fun I had playing it, but at the same time, I can't willfully ignore everything wrong about it. The lazy writing, poor characterisation, reused levels, bad controls, actual intrusive game bugs...

And yet, there's still a part of me desperately wanting to go back to play it. Not even to do anything; I've 100%'d the game, got all the S Ranks, collected all the collectables, hell, I've even raced against the best times of the *three* people in my friendlist who dared to buy this game.

I just wanna keep experiencing the game.

I think it's because even though the game does everything conceivable wrong, it does it wrong in the *right* way.

Okay, I need to start at the beginning here. If you're not aware already, *Sonic Forces* is the one where you get to make your own character, aka your own Sonic OC. Now, many people, especially Youtubers, are gonna to take this as the 'funny meme creator' and just go wild going 'haha i made deviantart the hedgehog lol'.

And that's fine. The game embraces that. Hell, there's a legit DLC that puts in the Sanic meme on a shirt for your character to wear.

But I think this is a pivotal moment, because if you let go of the mockery and allow yourself a bit of self-indulgence -maybe self-indulgent mockery perhaps- and take the time to make a character, any character, that you even slightly care about, the game rewards you for it.

Now, despite growing up with Sonic in the 90s, I do not have a Sonic OC. Shocking, I know. I do have a MLP OC, which... is its own kettle of fish, but whatever, she's gonna be the basis of my Sonic OC. I'm sure she's *very* happy about that.

And yes, the game designates your character as the Avatar, but we're going to call it what it is.

The character creation is surprisingly thought out. It's not perfect, but it does offer a wide variety of choices for species, eye shape, colours, and even ten 'end of level' victory poses to choose from. As you play through you'll unlock a crapton of outfits, too. Each species also offers a small unique bonus ability, such as cats keeping at least one ring after taking damage. By far though, the most useful are the wolf and bird abilities, which allow you to draw in nearby rings automatically and double jump, respectively.

Your OC joins in after you play through the first level as Sonic, which is Green Hill yet again. I know it's a recurring bit at this point -there's *always* going to be Green Hill in Sonic games until the end of time- but this is admittedly one of the sore points of the game. Not only do

we get Green Hill *and* Chemical Plant (the second most common reused Sonic level) in the game, but *Sonic Forces* reuses level regions, so later levels will have you exploring 'other' parts of Green Hill, Chemical Plant, and so on. Each region has at least three levels set in them, not counting boss fight, bonus stages, etc.

I do have to say though, it does help sell the overarching theme of the game. See, each region that is not specific to Eggman has been devastated in some way, even Green Hill at the very start of the game, which has been desertified, and is slowly losing its lush green.

The theme of the game? Eggman's won.

See, after you play as Sonic once, he meets up with Eggman, who essentially ambushes him with a team of Villains Past, mainly Shadow, Zavok, Metal Sonic and Chaos. There's also a *mysterious new enemy* who curbstomps Sonic into the ground. Sonic's dead.

Or, at least, that's what the game wants you to think for the next couple cutscenes.

So, anyway, it's six months later, Eggman's taken over 99.99% of the world, the 0.01% being the ragtag team of misfits that are Sonic's friends who have banded together to form a resistance, led by Knuckles.

And if you think I quickly skimmed over explaining that, that is exactly what we got in-game. A couple paragraphs of white text on a black background, saying just that. Outstanding.

So... yeah. Knuckles is leading the resistance as 'Commander' as Silver calls him. Why is Silver there? Who the fuck knows? It's never explained in-game. There *is* a prelude comic that quickly explains that Silver came back in time to warn everybody that shit must've gone down again, but going into the game blind you'll never know that.

But regardless, this is where your OC shows up. Knuckles introduces you as the sole survivor from the attack on the city and recruits you. Get ready to be referred to as kid, rookie or buddy for the rest of the game. Knuckles also gives your OC their primary weapon, a Wispon. It's a weapon that uses Wisp energy for its attack, based on the type of Wisp it uses. In this case, your first Wispon is the Burst variety, which attacks like a flamethrower.

Why the fuck are Wisps here if Sonic saved them all in *Sonic Colours* and they all went back to their home planet? Again, never explained. *Apparently* there is one tiny bit of Sonic media that briefly said 'yeah but they like it here tho' so... Wisps, I guess, sure.

Before you begin the next stage, the characters talk to each other through dialog boxes, and yay, Sonic's not actually dead lol. Instead he's only been horrifically tortured for months!

...wait what?

Yeeeah... apparently this is just in the English version? The original Japanese mentions nothing of the sort, and it's obvious a few scenes later where we see Sonic is just fine, albeit trapped in a cell, but he's chillin'.

Regardless, that's fucked up, bro.

So the next stage is the Chemical Plant, and is your OC's introductory level. They play *kinda* similar to Sonic, but they can't boost or double jump (except the bird OCs) but they do have a 'homing' attack, which is actually just a hookshot they happen to have? Maybe it comes with the Wispon, who knows. But this allows the OC to target enemies without needing the Wispon, and it also allows them to travel through the stage quickly, being also able to target springs in the distance as well as specifically placed target hooks to swing through the level.

I... I have to say, the OC S- *ahem* the Avatar Stages are so goddamn fun to play. Ignoring everything else for a second, just being able to fly through the stage (and later, returning to the stages with different unlocked Wispons) however you want, *as your OC*, is fucking perfect. There's not a single Avatar Stage I dread replaying. Even Aqua Road, the level that takes away most of your control for like, 75% of the level, is so short that it's fine. Except going for the collectables though. That was a bitch.

But yeah! Playing through the level, you'll eventually find Wisps of different colours. Right now we only have red Wisps available, but as we get more Wispon varieties, different Wisp colours will appear in other areas of the level, and some Wisp spots will even change colour to better suit the Wispon you currently have. Picking up say, a yellow Wisp when you have the red Burst Wispon does nothing, so this is a welcome mechanic.

Picking up a Wisp fuels your Wispon's special gauge. Normally, the Burst Wispon acts as a flamethrower, but using its special ability allows you to essentially grenade jump in the air continuously until the gauge runs out. And while there are very obvious 'use it here' spots throughout the game, you can save it for whenever you want.

Halfway through the level, we'll encounter the first of maybe five QTEs cutscenes in the entire game. I say QTEs, but it's really more like a TE. The reaction time is null and void; you just have to press the button before the very slowly shrinking circle on-screen disappears. You can go for a Perfect, as that will net you 70k points, but unless you're aiming for a S-Rank, it doesn't matter when you press it. The level timer even pauses until you continue.

Incidentally, the scoring on QTEs is fucking weird. Perfect is 70k, Great is 30k, and Good is 5k. Weird scaling, but I digress.

Failing one of these *usually* gets you instakilled, but here it's the first one, so it's a freebie I guess. Your OC just misses their mark and falls down to a lower section below where you normally end up, that, until just now, I had no idea was even there.

Still. These QTE scenes are odd. Like, you'd think you'd have a QTE here, on top of a train going into a tunnel:



Or here, accidentally flinging yourself into the path of another train:

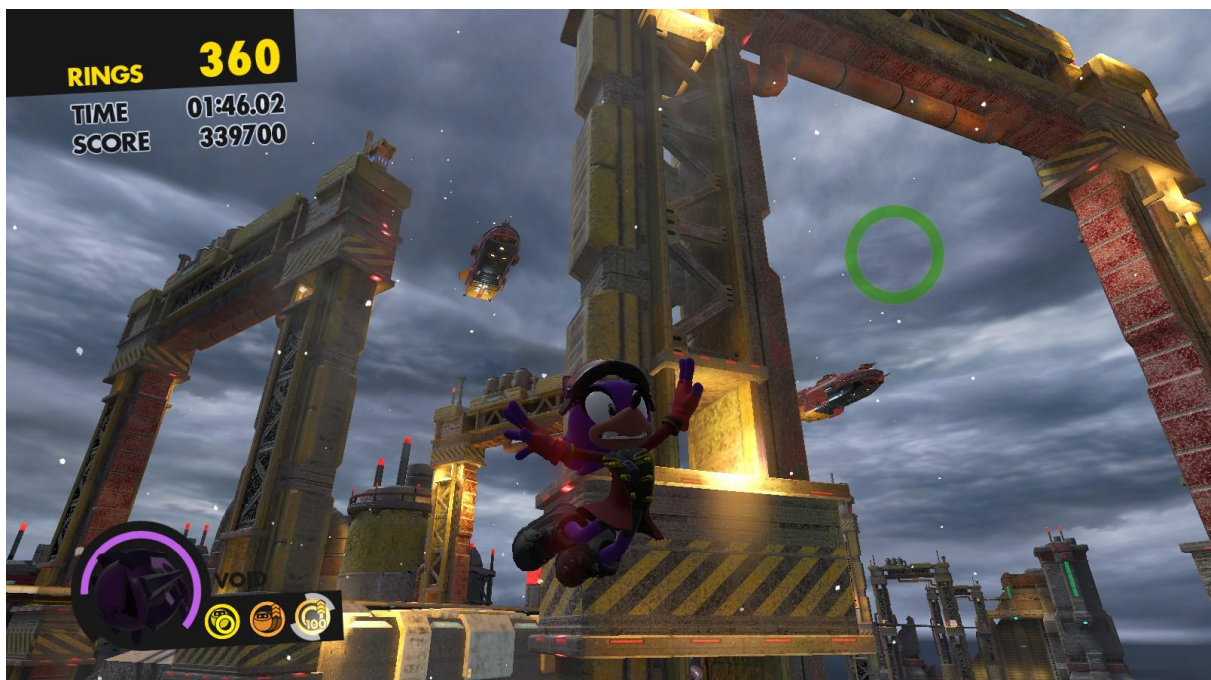


But nope, here's the *OMG Press it Now!* Moment:



Uhhh, okay? What the hell am I even aiming at? What bullshit Youtube clickbait thumbnail is this?

And just because it's funny, and I doubt many people even see this scene, here's when you fail:



Haha, she gonna die.

Nah, it's okay, she just fell down to a lower section, which means you miss out on a Red Star Ring on the upper section... except you can totally get back up with the hookshot anyway.

I do love how expressive the Avatar is though. It's weird; they put all this effort into the Avatar, and yet there are moments where you see Sonic in level cutscenes just blankly staring ahead, even when he's supposedly talking. Hell, Sonic doesn't even have an *idle animation*.

Anyway, that's pretty much it for Chemical Plant (the OC version at least, because yes, you'll play through Chemical Plant again as Sonic) and it's... honestly not bad! It's pretty linear, but it's a great stage for you to get used to how the OC operates in both 3D and 2D sections.

I do have to bring up one factor I've yet to talk about though. The music.

See, The OC stages have... unique music to them. They're not typical Sonic style music, but instead are songs with lyrics playing through the level. *Meaningful lyrics*. Each and every OC stage has it.

Let me take you out of the game for a moment. I have not been anywhere near the Sonic fandom since maybe the mid-2000s, but let's forget the specific fandom for a moment. What do young inexperienced fanfic writers do when they want to pour emotion into their story?

They copy in song lyrics. With *meaning*.

So, here we are, playing a Sonic game as our OC, set to lyrical songs that, though out of place they may be, in all honesty, actually do help set the mood.

Sonic Forces is not a Sonic game. It is a Sonic *fanfic*, turned into a game. With everything you expect to see from a fanfic written by a young writer who doesn't know any better. And it does it *beautifully*.

And I think it's upon realising this, that I started falling in love with the game.

If you're not convinced yet, don't worry, the best is still to come.

So, after we're done with our OC for now, we jump to Tails who, in a previous cutscene, had been reported by Silver as having 'lost it' when Sonic was fucking murdered in front of him. Again, this is weird English vs Japanese stuff; Tails originally just went missing and he even seems okay when we see him now, trying to fix up Omega, who apparently is severely beyond repair.

Suddenly Chaos 0 (i.e. 0 Chaos Emeralds absorbed) appears from the sewers and advances on Tails menacingly! And Tails bravely... cowers and cries for Sonic.

...**sigh**

I, like many other fans, have severe issues with this scene. I have stated in the past several times that *Sonic Adventure* is one of my favourite, if not most favourite, Sonic game. And sure, with the separate storylines overlapping certain events, maybe *canonically* Sonic was the one that took on Chaos 4 instead of Tails, but Tails was *there* and he saw how easy

Chaos went down. But even then, he took down Eggman all by himself at the end of his story and it was a pivotal moment that showed how much he grew over the game's events and that he doesn't always need Sonic.

And here he is, years later, crying for Sonic.

I mean. I guess they *had* to write Tails like that. Gotta make Classic Sonic appear in a funny way, right?

Oh right. Classic Sonic is here now. If you got the True Ending in *Sonic Mania* and wondered where the fuck Sonic disappeared to after he won, here he is. He pops out of a portal, sees Tails cowering and runs over and bops Chaos lightly on the head.

That's the last we'll see of Chaos, by the way.

So, Tails realises he's not dead yet, and rejoices upon seeing Sonic alive and well. Oh no wait, this isn't Tails' Sonic, this is Sonic's ~~past self~~ from another dimension!

...**sigh**

Yeah, they really pulled the ol' Yu-Gi-Oh/Dragonball Z card, and censored Classic Sonic's origins by having him be from another dimension. No fucking idea why, apart from the fact 'they don't want Classic Sonic to be Modern Sonic's younger self'.

So, now we can play as Classic Sonic, and Tails has a reason to talk over the radio now. Classic Sonic plays... weird? It wasn't immediately noticeable with Modern Sonic and the OC, but controlling a character precisely over platforms is *fucking* hard to do in this game. You'll mostly never see it with the other two, besides one main OC stage and a bunch of bonus stages, but Classic Sonic really highlights that feeling of 'Oh man, why can't I do this? I *should* be able to do this!' It'll take a while to get used to CS's weird momentum, but you kinda have to if you ever want to beat those time challenges.

One nice touch though, Classic Sonic can still do his Drop Dash from *Sonic Mania*.

Anyway, now we get a flashback for the OC!

So, here we see a bunch of default characters plus your OC desperately fighting back against the *mysterious villain* from earlier who curbstomped Sonic.

And... he curbstomps the entire squad of characters in one shot with laser beams, essentially fucking murdering them as your OC is cowering behind a rock.

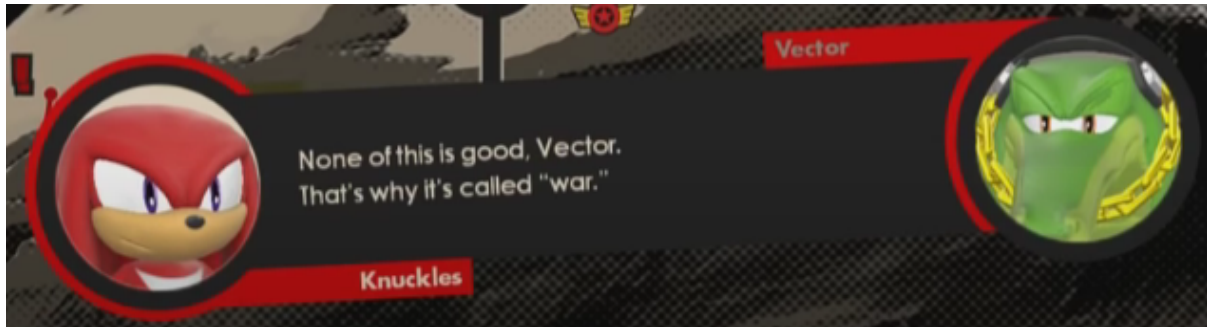
See? *That's* a good time to cower.

A Wispon falls at your OC's feet, and they desperately try to fight through their fear to grab at it, all as the *mysterious red-and-black villain* gloats at them, mocking them, telling them to run and scream, and maybe he'll let them live.

Jesus Christ, dude. Calm the fuck down.

So yeah, I guess that's what we did. Ran away to Knuckles' base of operations. Can't blame 'em, really.

The next stage is your OC going up to the Death Egg to rescue Sonic from his prison. Again, they try to hammer in the torture factor, but guys, come on, stop, it's not good.



Pft. Okay, Knux.

Anyway, so again, the OC's Death Egg stage is *really* fun. It starts out with something strangely unique to the OC, and that is drifting. Yeah. Sonic actually can't drift in this game, unlike previous games, but the OC (with the help of their hookshot) will automatically drift around corners in certain sections.

The rest of the level is pretty standard, and is a huge ring grabfest throughout. It offers a great demonstration of the Burst grenade jump ability where you can just blast your way through the air, collecting ring piles and more Burst Wisps along the way to constantly refill your special gauge. Again it's pretty linear, but it offers greater rewards this time for players who can consistently perform well enough to get to the secondary paths.

And again, the music just... it's not Sonic music, but it *fits so well* for the OC. I hate how much I love it.

After that, we see Sonic, who is doing absolutely fine despite the months upon months of torture. He's hanging out in his cell, and presumably due to the OC wrecking havoc through their level, the power to Sonic's... electrolight handcuffs (???) disappear and he gets in a boss fight with his prison guard, Zavok. Zavok is from *Sonic Lost World*, which I've never played personally, but he's a pretty tough looking guy. All red and black and...

... a lot of Sonic villains are red and black, huh.

Anyway, it's a decent boss fight. Sonic's a bit too slick to be running around the arena with no safeguards, but fortunately you don't have to be fast most of the time. One thing that can trip people up is they'll see the very obvious 'I'm going to slam into the ground HERE' shadow of the boss, and jump to anticipate avoiding the shockwave. Except... there is no shockwave. Instead you actually *need* to be standing on the ground to be launched high enough to homing attack, otherwise you're not attacking anything.

I mean, I didn't jump; I stood there like an idiot, but I've seen other people get perplexed by it, so.

Anyway. Zavok is defeated, and fades away to a *mysterious sound*, which Sonic picks up on. But the Death Egg goes into high alert, so Sonic hightails out of there and into his version of the Death Egg stage.

Credit where credit is due, despite being set in the same area, the stages are widely different. Sonic's stage is more out in the openness of space (???) rather than cooped up inside the Death Egg. It's also very short, and ends with essentially a 25 second cutscene with two QTEs.

The next scene has the OC surrounded by three Egg Pawns, very slowly advancing on them as they back into a corner. I'm not sure why; as we've definitely chewed through a few dozen robots in the blink of an eye on our way here, but hey, gotta make Sonic look good, right?

Because yay, Sonic's here! He smashes up the robots, and asks the OC if they're here to rescue him. Your OC grunts affirmatively, and get used to that as well. I think the most we say is 'huh?' in one scene. There's a bit of comedy over the radio, and Sonic and the OC hijack a ship to get back to Earth.

So the next level is *technically* set in Green Hill, but it's in the now desertified section, and you spend most of it inside Eggman's weapons factory anyway. This level also features both Sonic *and* the OC, labelled as a Tag level. It works... really well? You have Sonic's boost, as well as the OC's ability to hookshot and use their Wispon powers. There's not that many Tag levels, three out of twenty four (excluding boss levels), but again, they're really fun. They're also really short. It honestly makes me sad.



Every Tag level also has the *special* QTE, the Double Boost. At some point, Sonic will encourage your OC to help perform the Double Boost, And they'll charge up a fist bump as you're mashing the Boost Button to keep the circle inside the safe zone. Do it right, and Sonic and the OC will boost through ahead, all to the lyrics of Fist Bump, the game's theme song.



Fail, however, and Sonic and the OC will stumble for a couple seconds. It's really funny the first time you see it. Also, failing doesn't matter? As they'll double boost straight after anyway?? You just don't get the lyrics if you fail. Really funny. The first time you see it.

So um. I play *Sonic Forces* on the PC, with a keyboard. So, *turns out*, there's a really fucking weird bug in the game if you play with the keyboard. During the Double Boost QTE, the game will *sometimes* randomly *reassign* the Boost key to a *random* key on your keyboard.

Yeah.

You can be boosting fine before and after the QTE, but during it, the Boost key will not respond, and you have five seconds to figure out which key it actually is. Good thing the game never relies on you successfully pulling off a Double Boost.

After this, Amy reports that Silver is fighting the *mysterious villain* in the Mystic Forest and Sonic should probably get over there ASAP. So, Sonic runs through his version of the forest, and... it's not that fun. This stage gets a lot of flak for being a 'Hold Boost and sometimes Jump' stage, and it really is. At the end there's a QTE where a giant snake tries to eat Sonic. Fail, and the snake eats him, and it's instadeath. Succeed, and Sonic bops the snake on its head, and the snake eats him, and it's not instadeath. Go figure.

Sonic escapes, and we get to see Silver square off against the *mysterious villain*, who is just, oh, so happy to be ending another hero. They tussle for a bit, and a *mysterious red and black gem* falls as they fight, unnoticed. Sonic jumps in as Silver is down for the count, and there's just... *so much edge* radiating off this *villain*. You thought Shadow was 'Ow the Edge'? This guy has a lockdown on the edge so hard, he's edge-guarding.

I'm not kidding. His theme song legit has the line 'I was born in this pain'.

So, turns out his name is Infinite, such a *delightful* name for a *delightful red-and-black overpowered villain*. I'm not gonna lie, I hardcore love just how goddamn edgy Infinite is. Going back to my claim of a fanfic made game, Infinite *is* that guy in that fanfic. The one who has bullshit abilities with a *dark and edgy past* (though we won't know that until the DLC) and has an ego unmatched by all.

So Sonic has a boss battle against Infinite, and... the music is pretty bopping? Like, it doesn't fit at all; it sounds like a techno rave, and we're in the jungle ruins, but whatever, I like it. The fight is pretty interesting, and we get our first taste of what Infinite can do. He'll spawn areas of red-and-black pulsating cubes, and if Sonic touches them, suddenly the arena is filled with spikes and spike balls we now have to dodge until the effect wears off.

But it's pretty easy to dodge, and we curbstomp Infinite until the next cutscene where Infinite curbstomps Sonic right back and deems him not worthy to finish off and runs away.

Like, you *gotta* realise you're writing the character this way, right?

The next section is Classic Sonic running through Green Hill. I'll skip over it because it's just Green Hill, and Tails slowly realising 'wait, why is there sand, shit's fucked, bro'.

There is one point however, where halfway through you'll go through an automated loop and get flung into the air to the next part of the stage. I mention this, because if you're like me, you'll try to roll into a ball when this happens, because that's what you do right? If you do, you'll die.

Yeah, for some reason the flinging doesn't work if you're in a ball at that point.

Afterwards, Tails and Classic Sonic listen in on Infinite as he meets up with Eggman, and crushes a small gem like the one we saw before, and like the *big gem sticking out of Infinite's chest*, and tells him all the Phantom Ruby prototypes are destroyed. Eggman expositions back that they were defective; they could only be activated by the first person that activated them. Infinite gloats that only a being with his *strength of will* could ever activate them. That is an actual line, I fucking love this guy.

Eggman goes, oh yeah, by the by, didn't you run into Sonic a level or two ago? Infinite gloats some more, and Eggman loses his shit that Infinite didn't kill Sonic. If *only* Eggman had an extended amount of time, like, say, six months, where Sonic was incapacitated and held against his will. Oh well.

Anyway, Infinite carries on saying that sure, Sonic has beaten Eggman for *decades* but Infinite swiftly defeated him in their first encounter, because y'know, cutscenes count. He marvels about the power of his Phantom Ruby and then pisses off. Classic Sonic jumps out of hiding and bops Eggman's eggmobile, because that's what he does. We go into a boss fight that is just *Sonic 1* Green Hill's boss fight, because that's what Sonic Team does.

Anyway, once you do enough hits, Eggman's all 'haha get pranked bro' and busts out the Egg Dragon, which might've been intimidating if we hadn't already seen and beaten it twice already in previous games. Eggman also dishes out the line 'You've got a lot of nerve for a pint-sized Sonic from another dimension' so still pushing that agenda, I see.

Tails cheers 'Yeah! We did it!' despite doing fuck-all, but Eggman counters by saying in three days, his plan will come to fruition and everyone's fucked, and then he leaves.

The next stage is an OC stage through the ruined City, and it's... probably the weakest of the OC stages? It's a good stage, don't get me wrong, it's just not very memorable. There's a lot of opportunities to play around with any Wispons you've unlocked though.

The next stage is Classic Sonic going through Mystic Jungle in an attempt to find Modern Sonic, and it's more interesting than his Modern counterpart's version to say the least. It's very weird, it's like Casino Night Zone from *Sonic 2*, but... in the jungle ruins? The level music feels like a remix of Casino Night and Collision Chaos, so I appreciate that.

Following up on that, it's the OC's turn to venture into the Mystic Jungle, and it's Aqua Road. Most of this level is on twisty water slides with Motobugs endlessly bumping into you, dealing no damage, but throwing you off course. You can't jump or use any of your Wispons while you're watersliding, so most of the level you're just trying to stay on course and avoid careening off into certain death. It's decent, can be very annoying but also very short. Music's nice, and I like the aesthetics.



After that, the OC wanders to where Silver and Infinite were fighting, and stumbles across the gem from before, presumably a Phantom Ruby prototype. It glows when we pick it up, so that's probably not a bad sign or anything. Also Classic Sonic and Tails now show up, so now everyone's reunited at the base, yay! Sonic tells his other self, 'Oh hey, it's been generations since I've seen you!'

...

Is it too late to refund this game?

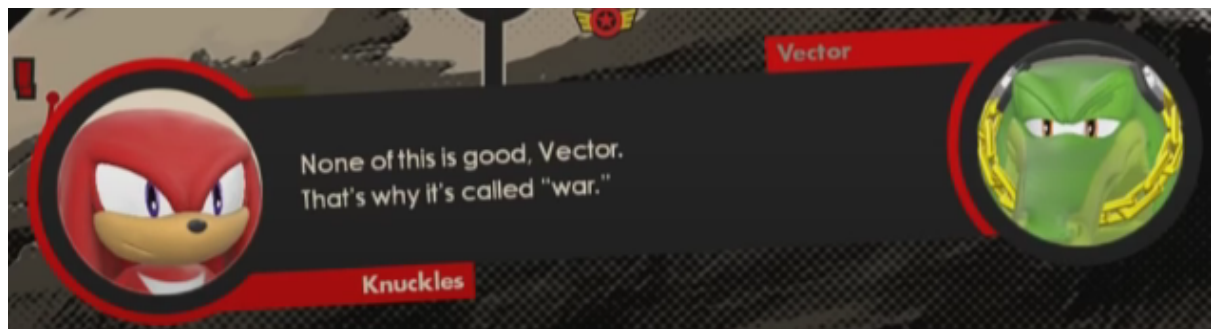
Okay, fine. So, Tails tries to warn everyone about Eggman's three-day plan, but reports of Shadow attacking the city comes in. So Sonic runs off to see just what the fuck Shadow's deal is. Sonic's run through the City... it's practically identical to the OC's version of the City, so that's very disappointing.

Sonic finds Shadow at the end of the level, and Shadow wordlessly attacks. Suddenly, another Shadow Chaos Controls in and spinkicks the first Shadow in the face, knocking him to the curb as he fades away. Sonic is befuddled, and Shadow, the real Shadow, explains that that other Shadow was a fake. Sonic actually asks how there can be a fake Shadow.

So, Shadow explains that Infinite can create 'virtual reality projections'. Essentially, Infinite can create whatever the fuck he wants, and it'll be as real as the real thing, only it's not real but the Phantom Ruby makes you *think* it is real so it *is* real but only to *you* and...

Look, I'm not going to try and science how this works.

So yeah, all those bad guys at the start were just fakes made by Infinite. And Infinite can make, well, infinite amounts of them. So that's not good.



Okay okay, I'll stop.

But Knuckles does have a plan! While Sonic's off talking with Shadow, Knuckles got wind that Eggman's forces are undermanned at Metropolis, so he's launching a full-scale attack to take back the city! The next stage is the OC's Metropolis stage, and it's honestly the best goddamn stage in the entire game. I'm gonna be talking about this one a lot.

So, Metropolis is one of the nicer looking regions in the game, with it being predominantly white, with splashes of green and blue, and an overall futuristic look to it all.

The OC swings into action, running through the stage as per usual, but then, roughly twenty seconds in, as you're ramping off a speed pad and flying through the air...



Infinite joins you.

Now, as much as we'd like to mock Infinite for being Edgy McEdgison, he *is* the one with reality-warping powers, and your OC, aka you? You're not Sonic, or Shadow, or anyone important. You're just an average person, albeit an average person with a precision hookshot and amazing alien-powered weapons.



But still.



He's going to fucking murder you.

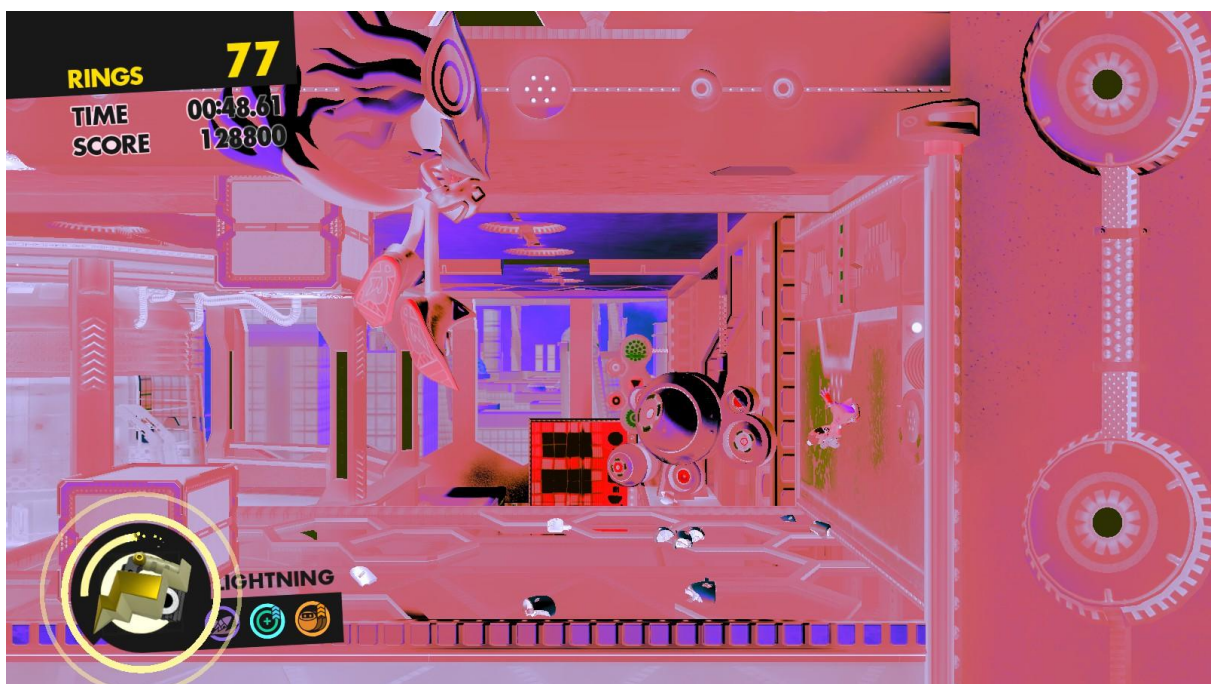


And there's nothing you can do about it.

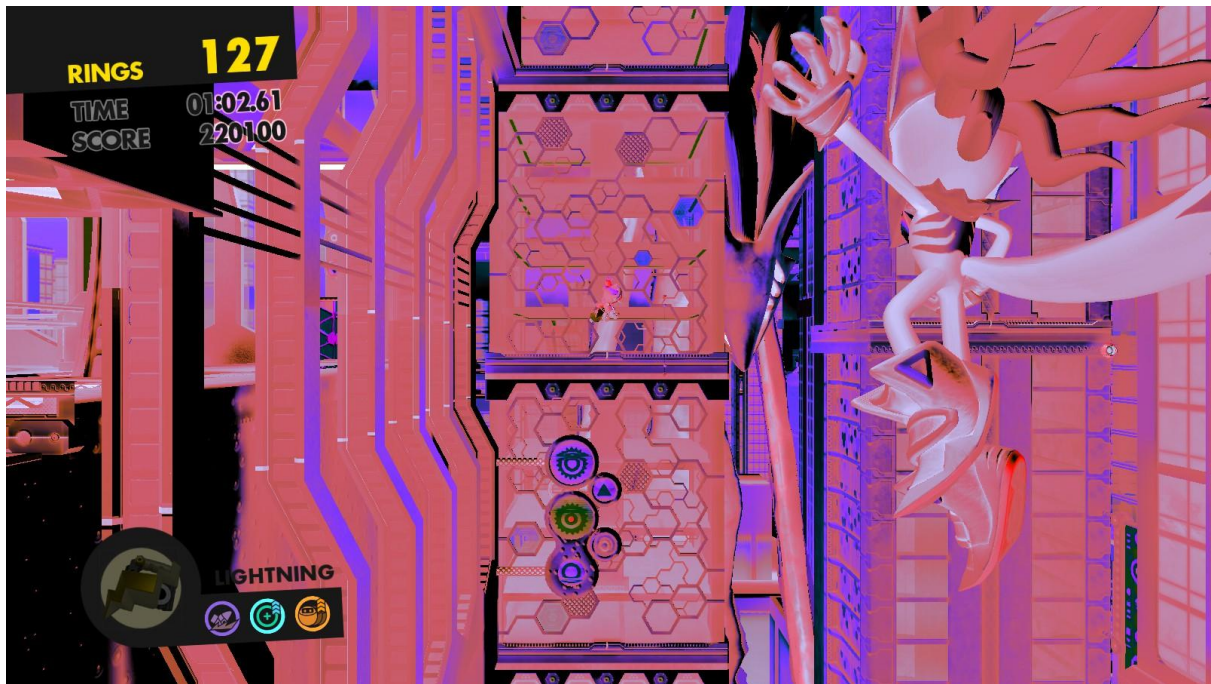
He starts off by flipping your gravity and while you're dealing with *that*, he creates giant eldritch kaiju versions of himself to terrorise the city and try to crush you.



As you try to get to safety, reports come over the radio confirming that everyone in the full scale attack has just gotten fucked by Infinite. But you can't worry about them, because Infinite has his beady glowy eye on *you*, and keeps flipping your gravity...



over...



and over.



Amy confirms that 80% of the resistance have been wiped out, with the remaining gone missing. Holy shit.

Towards the end you're just forced to retreat and run away, all the while Infinite watches.



This... is one of the best levels I've played. The music was wonderfully fitting, I love that you had no idea going into it that Infinite would show up, I love that Infinite just *dominated*, perfectly showing how much power he has, and there was no victory at all here for you. Just, twenty or thirty seconds into the stage, and *boom* there he is. You can say a lot about Infinite, but this was his shining moment, and it was *glorious*.

Oh yeah, fucking hell, Knuckles. What kind of attack plan was that?

So, anyway, the OC encounters Infinite once more on the bridge, and Infinite is just basking in his own power, calling us a trembling child and asking if we're going to fight and die here, or run away in fear again.

Luckily, the OC thinks of Sonic and Imagination Sonic shouts some inspiring words at us, so we're... gonna take on Infinite?

Oh shit.

Okay, well, short game, guys, short game.

Infinite is amused by our bravado, and promises to teach us fear and pain.

So, now we have a boss fight against Infinite with the OC. Infinite is harder to hit this time round, and spends several seconds out of reach as he sends creeping vines of black and red cubes after us. If we touch them, the room we're in is suddenly filled with turrets, or filled with giant rocket drills threatening to skewer us painfully. Infinite will also charge at us, causing the same effects if he catches us. The trick is to get out of the way so he's in reach for a few attacks.

Or you can just use one of the Wispons that drains half his health in one go. But shh, it's like, *really hard* otherwise.

Infinite gets pissed that we cheesed his fight, and launches a couple attacks at us which we dodge, and in the process almost drop the gem we picked up a while back. Infinite remembers us from the flashback, and is bemused that we decided to come back and throw everything away. He summons a bunch of turrets at us, which we futilely try to block, but the attack just... phases through us?

Infinite doesn't know what just happened, but knocks us aside and flees, saying it doesn't matter as Eggman's plan will happen in two more days.

Dammit Infinite.

Actually, so, apparently this is again the English version rewriting stuff. So, apparently the prototype rubies were said to only activate once, and Infinite was testing the OC to see if they had such a prototype. They did, obviously, and they used it to cancel out Infinite's attack just then, so Infinite deemed the OC harmless now as they used up their prototype.

Dammit Sonic Team.

The next level is Classic Sonic going through Chemical Plant. It's Classic Sonic, it's Chemical Plant, you already know how it plays out.

So while that's happening, reports of Metal Sonic in the City come in. Sonic takes the OC with him for a Tag level.

So this lev- OH FUCK GIANT DEATH EGG ROBOT



This is a QTE moment, where you will die if you miss it, but it's otherwise easy. The OC swings about the robot with Sonic in tow and they spin dash through its weak point for massive damage.

I didn't even know we *could* spin dash.

Whew. Okay so, that's over and-



OH FUCK GIANT METAL SONIC

Yeah, okay so, despite not being labelled as one, this is a boss stage. Metal Sonic will hover in front of us as we constantly run at him. We dodge his lightning storm attacks, and homing attack at him. Sometimes he'll surround himself with broken robots we have to clear out first.

It's not a bad fight, and will end prematurely if we take too long dicking about. Using certain Wispons can cheese the fight, like Void or Hover will remove the protection ring of robots in one go, or the Drill which if used right can actually take out a large chunk of Metal Sonic as he charges you in his supposedly invulnerable attack.

Either way, you finish the fight with a Double Boost. Succeed or fail, you succeed and blast Giant Metal Sonic into a bunch of red and black cubes.

Oh, and Sonic gives the OC a fist bump. Gasp, that's the name of the song!

So, Tails comes up with a plan to depower the Phantom Ruby. It involves destroying the Death Egg, but they can't do that unless Eggman is distracted. So Silver nominates the OC, saying Eggman would never see it coming. ...sure?

This stage is the OC's foray into Green Hill, and it's not that bad? There's some finicky platforming in the middle that you'll have to get used to, but otherwise it's pretty good. The music is very upbeat, no doubt *symbolising* how positive the OC must be feeling right now, coming off a victory over Metal Sonic and *Infinite*.

As the OC goes through Eggman's factory in Green Hill, there's a giant robot crab in the background, and there are giant spiky robot crab legs scattered through the level stomping up and down. Getting squished is an instakill so you need to be careful. And the platforming mechanics doesn't make this easy, especially if you have a Wispon with passive abilities that speed you up suddenly.

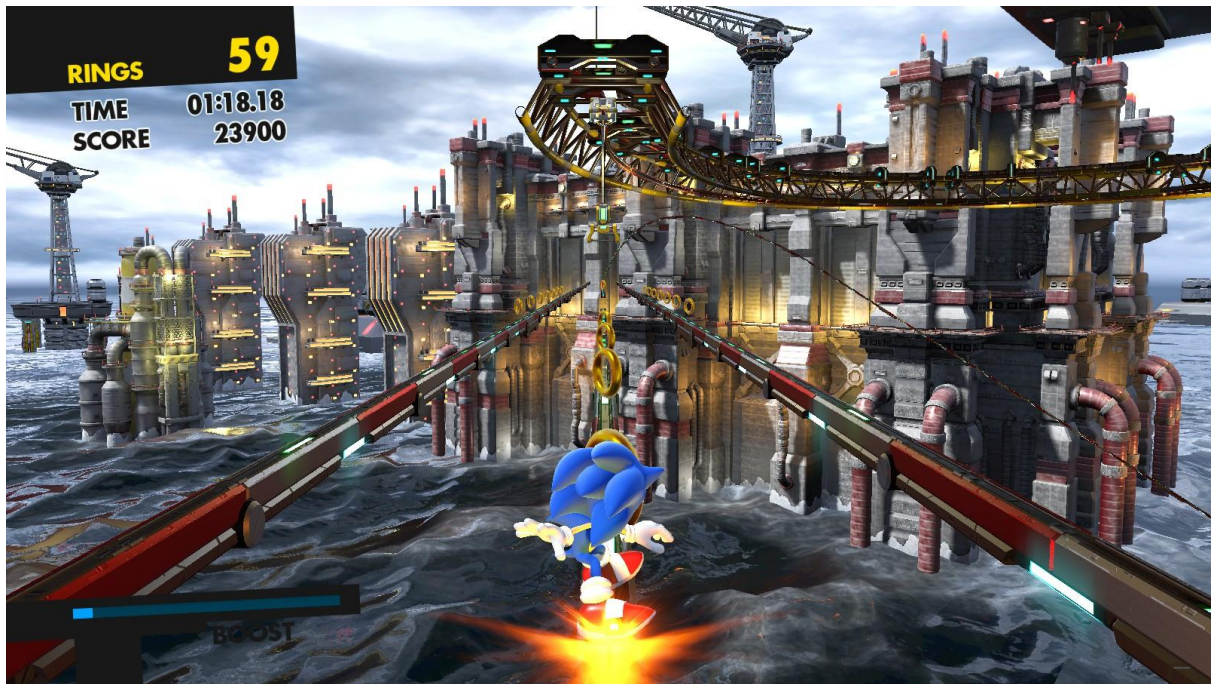


Once you reach the end of the level, one of the giant robot crabs launches themselves into play and starts chasing the OC, ala previous chase scenes in other Sonic games, like the GUN Truck in *Sonic Adventure 2*. You have to run ahead and dodge the chunks of ground the crab throws at you. Survive, and you'll be able to QTE the Giant Enemy Crab, hogtying it with your hookshot like the AT-AT Walkers on Hoth.



While the OC is busy with that, Sonic heads off to the Chemical Plant to find the computer room. You might think I'm memeing, but no, he really is. Once he finds it they're gonna use it to deactivate the Death Egg's defense systems.

Sonic's Chemical Plant stage is actually pretty nice? Like, we start outside it over the ocean, and it has that Oil Ocean feel to it but without the garish green and purple colour scheme. As far as Chemical Plant stages go, this feels the freshest. Ironical, since it's probably the most polluted, but whatever, right?



So now the Death Egg is defenseless, Classic Sonic takes his turn in the Death Egg. It's a lot like Death Egg Zone from *Sonic 3&K*, because of course it is. I don't have *much* of an issue with this, since this is the first reimagining of Death Egg Zone in 3D, buuut, Death Egg Zone was kinda annoying, and now we have to deal with the same annoyances with Classic Sonic's weird momentum. And we don't have the lightning shield in this game so, oof.

But we destroy the Death Egg! Classic Sonic escapes the explosion somehow, and everyone back on Earth cheers as they watch the livestream of the Death Egg blowing up. Eggman watches the same livestream, and is upset. He calls for a tactical retreat which *displeases* Infinite. Eggman just tells him to shut the fuck up.

Now that the Phantom Ruby is weaker, Sonic goes off to Metropolis to hunt down Eggman. His Metropolis stage is decent, not too flashy, some platform gimmicks, but this level will definitely kill you a few times if you're still thinking Sonic has drift abilities, because you will boost yourself straight off a few corners.

At the end of the level is Eggman, who was waiting for Sonic. He commands Infinite to summon a portal to 'null space', an area in space and time where absolutely nothing exists. The portal starts sucking Sonic in... but it's your OC to the rescue! They hookshot in and use it to grab Sonic and... the hookshot snaps, sucking both Sonic and your OC into null space. ...shit.

Tails is baffled, like, 'but we destroyed the power source!' And Eggman tells him, 'you sure did, like you *always* do, so I had a backup source under the city, get fucking rekt, kid'

So, the next stage is a Tag stage in Null Space, which, despite being a space with absolutely nothing, somehow manages to have an ever-growing platform to run on and a breathable atmosphere. Still, it's a very bleak and dreary area, and I can't imagine how we'd going to esca-



Dammit Sonic.

So, Sonic automatically calls for a Double Boost which allows Sonic and your OC to escape Null Space by... running really fast? It doesn't make a whole lot of sense, at least, not until I read someone's thoughts on the scene and brought up that your OC is still holding the Phantom Ruby prototype, which we earlier saw cancel out Infinite's attack. And because Sonic is so *confident* that they'll escape, your OC starts to believe it too, which activates the prototype, opening a portal out of Null Space. It's honestly such a wonderful premise that I wish it was *actually brought up in-game*. But it doesn't. We don't even get a glimpse of the prototype, just to say, hey remember this?

But anyway. Sonic and your OC escape Null Space, fifteen seconds into the level and the rest of it is just Metropolis again, albeit with Fist Bump playing throughout the level. And it's a *good* level too. It gets you so pumped, and it's perhaps the most involved Tag level in the game, with *three* separate paths you can go, depending on your Wispon, and they're all bam, bam, bam, let's go, let's go! It's just baffling we get this whole Null Space area, and *nothing is done with it*. What's worse is that there's even hidden dialogue in the Null Space area. We just never hear it because the starting spawn point is placed well after the trigger area for the dialogue.

But I digress.

Sonic and the OC blaze through Metropolis and catch up with Eggman, who's *absolutely* baffled that Sonic escaped, and Sonic backtalks him, going on about the real super power of *friendship*.

Naw man, it was totally the prototype Phantom Ruby.

Eggman flees to recoup, and we follow him to the last region in the game, Eggman Empire Fortress. So as *everyone* rushes to EEF, we have a full-scale attack between the Resistance and an army of Zavoks, Chaoses, Shadows and Metal Sonics. I'm not sure why Infinite is only choosing these four to replicate but sure.

So, Infinite comes out in front to confront Sonic, and there's some talk between the two when-

SUDDENLY OMEGA IS HERE

...uh, okay? I mean, it's great he's back and all, but like, how and when did he get repaired? And... he only takes a couple potshots at Infinite. I'm really not sure what the point was.

Infinite is similarly annoyed by the pointless intrusion and summons *the fuckin' sun*. That's right, he's Majora's Masking this baby, and we're already on the last hour.

I'm not going to question how the sun isn't burning everyone's eyes as they look at it, or being burnt to a crisp just by sheer proximity. I'll bring the points up, but I'm not going to question them. I know my head'll hurt if I try.

So Tails notices that the OC is holding a Phantom Ruby prototype, which is reacting. He theorises that *maybe* if the OC takes that up to the sun, they'll cancel it out.

That's right. Tails is telling you to launch yourself into the sun to save everyone.

So... yeah. Welcome to the first EEF stage, throwing yourself into the sun. And... it's honestly pretty good. The music is super on the nose, but the atmosphere is perfectly dreary as everyone is telling you, no, stop, you're crazy, come back you fucking idiot. And Eggman is *laughing at you*, jeering at the fact that you think you can stop *the sun*.



The platforming is tricky, but there's every Wispon imaginable scattered throughout the stage, so no matter which Wispon you have, you'll usually have a way through the stage. Some Wispons cheese the level harder than others, but on a first run of the level, it's got a good dramatic feel. There's even a giant death laser chasing you halfway through the level.



Get to the end as people start to cheer you on, because y'know, you *might actually pull this off*, and as Infinite and Eggman predict the end for everyone, *poof*. The sun vanishes. Eggman is gobsmacked, and the OC swings back to the ground, and collapses as the prototype shatters in their hand.

Tails acts smug towards Eggman, but he doesn't deserve to be giving burns in this game.

Now that Infinite used a fuckton of Phantom Ruby energy to create the sun, everyone charges in for the attack, and Sonic gives chase after Infinite.

Sonic's EEF stage is decent; it's fully 3D, and since it's predominantly downhill you can clear a bunch of areas by boosting over them. Sadly this *does* make it a rather short level. But while it lasts it's good.

So now Sonic meets Infinite for a rematch. Infinite boasts some more, and Sonic tells him to put up or shut up.

So... remember the Metal Sonic fight? It's the exact same.

No really, it's just the same.

I *could* say it's different in that it's only Sonic this time, but halfway through the OC jumps in, turning the level into a Tag level.

It's the exact same.

...*sigh*

You'll Double Boost into Infinite, and that's it. You defeated Infinite with the power of friendship.

...*sigh*

So, Infinite tries to get up, but he gets suddenly called away, and his last words are 'No, wait! I can still fight!' You might think Infinite will come back as a *surprise* last boss, but no. That's it. That's the last we see of Infinite. (at least, until the DLC, which acts as a prequel)

My boy deserved a better end, honestly.

Eggman shows up, and is like, 'huh, didn't think Infinite could lose. Oh well.' Eggman is surprisingly confident despite losing his ace.

Tails tracks the signal from Infinite's Phantom Ruby, and finds it going underground. Eggman must be up to something, and sends Classic Sonic over to check it out.

Classic Sonic's EEF stage is *hard*. There's a lot of platforming, there's semi-homing missiles, and worst of all, *an autoscroll section over a death pit*. Again, you're *really* wanting to get a good handle on how Classic Sonic moves for this.

Besides the difficulty, it's actually a pretty good looking stage. I swear there's remnants of Scrap Brain Zone mixed into the music, so that's very cool.

Now that we found a way in thanks to Classic Sonic, New Coke Sonic and the OC team up for a Tag level, charging into the reactor. It's... I dunno, It's a very short level. Once you learn how to sidestep effectively, you can just boost through this whole section and just dodge the spinning spike wheels of insta-death with no worries. Once you're at the reactor, you just have to destroy the three Phantom Rubies Eggman has powering the reactor. There's lasers spinning around, but you can jump them easily as you use your Wispon of choice, or better yet, cheese with the Drill as charging its attack makes you *invulnerable*.

There's another Double Boost to get out of there as the reactor explodes.

So, The two Sonics, the OC and Tails all gather and celebrate their victory, but Eggman shows up in his Final Boss machine! And Rouge confirms over the radio that more enemies are showing up still, including copies of Infinite. Turns out, the reactor was just a decoy until Eggman got this robot ready, fully powered by the Phantom Ruby integrated inside it. Tails puts two and two together and says the Phantom Ruby is now invulnerable. Eggman gloats that he will win, just as planned.

Sonic's had enough of this shit, and the two of him and the OC jump into the final battle. Tails just waves.

The final boss is in three phases. The first phase is as Classic Sonic, and it's essentially the same fight as the Egg Dragoon, but now you're on a platform that is slowly forming and disappearing, like an extremely long Mario Snake Block that keeps going up and down five blocks as it moves right and left. Why is this obvious virtual platform here? How the fuck did Classic Sonic get up here? Who can say.

Once Classic Sonic is done bouncing Eggman's attacks back at him, the Final Boss Robot crashes down to a lower platform where your OC is! Eggman will periodically launch homing missiles at you and will take a page out of Bowser 64's book, and slam the ground with his giant robot fist, creating multiple shockwaves you have to jump over. Once he's down enough health, he will further copy Bowser and destroy part of your platform with his fist.

There's actually a lot of variety in how you can beat this second phase. You can attack the fist while it's down for minor damage, or if you're feeling like being a risky daredevil, you can actually jump off stage and attack his core directly with your hookshot when he's close enough.

Defeat this phase, and the Giant Death Robot will shut down, and go limp. But there's a third phase so a smaller Third Phase Robot bursts out from the core, and takes all three of you with it into Null Space. It's Sonic's turn, but he has the OC and his other self running with him. There's a lot of attacks to dodge, and you need to collect enough Wisps to be able to continuously boost to get close enough. Why are there Wisps in Null Space? *shrug*

But each time you get close, Sonic will rapidly homing attack the Boss into a stun, allowing the three of you to do another Homing Attack each on each part of the Boss for critical damage. You do this about five or six times, each time the Boss will change up its attack pattern afterwards.

...And I have to admit, this final part of the boss has some kickass music, and it's... really cool seeing your... Avatar land some hits on the final boss. I'm pretty hyped by all this.

So, once you knock down all the Final Boss' health, Sonic will call for a *Triple Boost*, between him, Classic Sonic and the Avatar. Alright, sure! I mean, my boost key is still bugged but whateve-

Uh-oh.

You *need* to pull off the Triple Boost. If you don't you'll be kicked out of the QTE, and you'll have to catch up to the Final Boss again, still stunned. The music's even like, 'wait, you didn't *do* it yet?'

So, yeah. At this point, it's looking like I have to pound every key just to find the win button. But! Lucky, this bug is so bugged, it inadvertently puts in its own solution. If you go to the controls and try to reassign the Boost key while it's bugged, it will instantaneously reassign itself to the key it's hiding in. So all you have to do is cancel out of the menu, get back into the game, and *mash that random key, you cheating li' bastard of a bug!*

So we did it! All the evil clones start to fade away and everybody cheers. Tails and everyone sees Classic Sonic off as he fades away, presumably off to *Sonic Mania Adventures*, judging by his pose. Sonic delivers a kind of ham-fisted line about fixing up the *real world* we live in. I'm not gonna mock the message, because I agree.

And... roll credits.

The credit music is... weird. I think someone puts it nicely when they said it sounds like a song you'd hear at the end of a Disney movie. It's not bad or anything, just... definitely does not sound like a Sonic song.

After the credits, Knuckles wraps up the resistance, and the Avatar heads out. They meet up with Sonic one last time, fist bump, and both go their separate ways. The end.

The game's over. I don't have to put up with the clunky controls, the bad writing, Tails being fucking useless, the *sheer* amount of automated scenes... did I tell you about that? A *lot* of the 'gameplay' is just you watching the game play itself for a bit as it hands you a controller saying 'Yeah, press that boost button! Oh, look *you* did that!'

As a long-time fan of the Sonic games, this was just awful in every sense.

...so why do I want more?

Everything about this is wrong, but somehow, it worked. I *keep* going back to this game. I keep replaying it, admittedly mostly the Avatar stages, because those were the *most fun*, but I... I just want it to keep going.

I love this game.

...

I think... I think it's because this game really is just a fanfic.

You have the self-insert, you have the edgy villain, you have the song inserts, you have characters standing around doing nothing, you have characters being *fucking useless* when they oughta be very capable, you have characters and villains make an appearance just 'because', it's all very dark and gritty but there's no reason for it to be, the plot is shaky at best, and the whole thing plays very smoothly when you let it go as it wants, but the moment you try to stop and examine things in detail the whole thing falls apart.

This is the fanfic everybody wrote when they knew nothing about writing. And it's perfectly replicated in game form. I really do think with this game you have to loosen up a little, and allow your younger self to enjoy the fanfic they dreamed of.

...even if they come from another dimension.