Sonic Team did get one thing right in Sonic Adventure, and that was the homing attack. *So many people* complain about the homing attack. Entire mods and fangames are built around removing it; there have been more attempts to "fix" it than I can count.

But taking the homing attack away from a 3D Sonic (or putting the homing attack *in* a 2D Sonic) **fundamentally misunderstands** what works about Sonic the Hedgehog and why the original games play so much like a dream.

Sonic is based entirely around two things: **friction** and **momentum.** Say you're playing Sonic 1 and you come across a badnik. You're running full speed.

If you want to avoid it, you have three choices:

1- jump
2- roll, or
3- run the other way

if 1, you keep moving the direction you were going without a hitch.
if 2, the same, except now the badnik is destroyed.
if 3, you have to build up resistance before you move the other direction. Sonic does something Mario never does. Sonic *skids*. In Super Mario World you come to a complete stop by stopping. In Sonic, you have to deal with inertia.

Sonic the Hedgehog is therefore frictional. The game rewards momentum and punishes the lack thereof. If you can't keep things going, then, quite simply you're just too *slow.* Or at least you won't feel as good, and the game won't be as good *for* you.

Let's go back to 1; if you jump, you can theoretically hit that badnik, no problem, causing the same scenario as in 2. In fact, that's easy. That's *simpleton.* It's positively *babytown frolics.* Hitting an enemy with a jump in Sonic 1, 2, 3, or CD is child's play. It's *actually the literal meaning of the term "child's play."*

But if you put a z-axis on that shit it falls right the fuck apart.

Trying to do that in 3D is a nightmare. Mario doesn't have this problem; he doesn't move at the speed of **physical inanity** so he can stomp goombas in 3D without any trouble.

Sonic tries to do that and he becomes the visual equivalent of pizza ingredient.

So they gave him a homing attack.

Sonic with a homing attack in 3D is like Babe Ruth with an aluminum bat. It's not quite 1:1 but it's remarkable how well it works. With the homing attack, Sonic can have momentum in 3D.

Sonic Adventure doesn't allow for it, though. Sonic Adventure is a poor, poor game. Sonic rarely is able to play in a truly momentum-based way. At least the music's good.

Sonic Adventure 2 is an entire meal made out of homing attack pie. Now that the game works- now that it has physics that make some kind of sense and layouts to match - it is a massive extension of a Sonic 1 level. A Sonic 1 level is an obstacle course built specifically for rolling and scratching.

Sonic Adventure 2 takes this philosophy and warps it into a twistedly beautiful example of 3D trial-by-fire do-or-die game design.

Much of this is in the ranking system. The ranking system is a thing of fucking beauty.

Getting an A-rank is borderline insane. You have to be *perfect.* If you slip up, you're done. That's it. Done.

So you try again.

You learn every single choice throughout the level. Every few seconds in a Sonic Adventure 2 level you are given a choice to make. You have a half a second to figure out which choice you're going to make, and that choice will determine your path for the rest of the level.

So Sonic Adventure 2 is kinda like Spelunky without the randomness.

Actually, that's not quite true; Hunting stages are random.

Everyone hates the hunting stages. The camera isn't that great. Sonic Adventure 2 fixes most of what went wrong with the first game but it can't get the camera down (among other problems that remain: it still relies on scripted loops; it still occasionally (although with far less regularity) will allow you to glitch through the level; it still has Crush 40; it still has a super-form end battle that takes no effort) and that can make finding the emeralds/emerald shards/keys/your journal/your false teeth/your car/a baby that much more awful.

But if you can move past the camera and learn how to use it correctly these stages

too become harrowing for the *right* reasons. Move around the level hardcore. Find the beepy. Get the beepy. The second you get the first whatsit within the time allotted for a Perfect you don't think "thank god;" you think "wow I really hope I can do that again." It's terrifying to play as Knuckles and Rouge.

The Hard mode stages they play through are absolute brilliance, by the way. For the most part, the puzzles they have to go through are brainy enough to be enticing without wrapping back to being *stupid.* You often can find the emeralds but not know how the fuck to get them, or at least get them in the time necessary for an A-rank.

There are baffling things, and then there are things like being confronted with the emerald shard in the wind tunnel.

Shooting, too, is a thing of wonder. It's Virtua Cop without being on rails. Running around in the mechs, though, not so much. The hover negates most of this issue- and it is a *big* issue- but it's still the least polished part of the game. The walkers control like tanks. That might be the point, but this is a *Sonic* game. This isn't Tail's Tank Patrol. Sonic gotta go fast.

The shooting stages inherently fail to match the rest of the game because they don't gotta go fast. They're methodical. They're as difficult as the rest of the game- and as inherently brilliant- but they lack the core mechanic that makes Sonic work. They're not frictional. There's no momentum to the walkers if you're not in mid-air.

Their stages have brilliant shooting mechanics but terrible controls.

But they're still arcadelike and they still have score momentum. If you're on a streak of Perfects in a mech level you can still *approach*, if not cross, the line the other parts of the game reach.

Sonic Adventure 2 is arcade game design writ large and broad without the quarters. It's basically free gambling. It's fun, it's clicky, it's basically a messier Tony Hawk. That's what makes it so good.