## Old School Gaming!
### Sonic the Hedgehog

Logan "T" King, Sophomore

This month, as promised, I will look at **Sonic the Hedgehog** CD for the Sega CD. To start us off, here is a little back-story. Development on Sonic CD began in Japan at around the same time development on **Sonic 2** began in the US. Most of the major **Sonic 1** staffers were in the US working on **Sonic 2**, and it's probably because of this shift in talent that Sonic CD stands out from the rest of the series. Because Yuji Naka (the original programmer for **Sonic the Hedgehog**) had left the company and gone to its American arm (which was really considered a different company due to the immense hatred between the two parts), development was handed off to Naoto Oshima, who was the man behind the concept of Sonic. This is the main reason why the game is so different from every other Sonic game. There will also be two different scores for this game. One for the European version and one for the American version. The European version of Sonic CD was released a month after the Japanese version and is the exact same game. The US version, however, features a completely new soundtrack. To be polite, the American version soundtrack sucks. Anyways, on to the game!

When you see this game, you will be surprised to see how large it is in scope (at first). When you boot up the game, you see a minute and a half long anime opening sequence. The U.S. version is a badly compressed one due to reformatting for U.S. televisions. After that, you are treated to a title screen with four levels of parallax scrolling and a fully 3D Sonic. The actual game graphics are a little disappointing, however, using **Sonic 1** sprites, even though **Sonic 2** had already been out for a year. As a plus, though, they do have smoother animations. The back-rounds are quite simply, beautiful, with tons of things going on, taking full advantage of the Sega CD's expanded color pallete. The transitions from past to future and the comparisons able to be made from the stages are simply brilliant, and the levels are very nicely put together.

An interesting gimmick in this game is the use of time travel. The object is to go back in time and destroy a machine that, over the course of time, destroys the environment. If you do that before you beat the boss, you get the **"good future"**. If you get all **"good futures"**, you get the **"good ending"**. Doesn't that sound **"good"**? This also influences game length. The game is made up of seven rounds (called *"zones"* in every other Sonic game), each with three zones (called *"acts"* everywhere else), each with four time zones (past, present, future, good future, each with wildly different level designs based around a central schematic). That's 84 different levels! Far more than **Super Mario World's** 60+ different levels but less than **SMW's** 96 different level endings.

Another gimmick about this game is its save game feature. It uses the Sega CD's onboard RAM to save your game progress, profile options and time trial records. Very few games had this in 1993.

One thing that may catch you off guard in this game is the controls. They are very tight, almost too tight, especially if you have played other Sonic games. **Sonic** changes direction mid-jump, as always, but he does it instantly, skipping the slow down stage. That being said, once you get used to them, they aren't a problem again. Until, maybe, you play another Sonic game.

Another thing this Sonic game has different is the bosses. Unlike nearly every other Sonic game ever, these bosses are original and not of the *"just hit it 8 times to kill"* fare. Every one asks you to do something different. For example, in one you have to run on a treadmill to wear a hole in the bottom of a machine that Dr. Robotnik is in. When a hole wears through, you win. In another you have to race throughout a level with Metal Sonic while Dr. Robotnik shoots at you with a laser if you fall behind. Very fun with each one a different challenge.

Now we come to the music. While most of my Sonic-loving peers regard it as demon spawn directly from the devil, that's an exaggeration. It isn't quite that bad. The PAL (Europe) version had full instrumental rock/techno for each level, only resorting to pop in the anime intro (and even then it was at least instrumental). The U.S. version uses synthesized pop (not even the techno/rock of **Sonic 2**!) for every single level plus the intro. It depends on your tastes in music, I guess, but everyone I know that has heard both soundtracks always sides with the PAL version. But keep this in mind: it is enough to drastically lower the game's score, in my case, as it should have taken advantage of the CD medium like the PAL version did, and it also doesn't fit three game nearly as well.

So, I know what you're saying. But, Logan, how does your über 1337-ness in the way of Sonic apply to me? Well, in all honesty, it really doesn't. But if you manage to get a Mega CD, Mega Drive and a European TV, in addition to a U.S. Sega Genesis and Sega CD, and a copy of both games for their respective systems (like I have), compare the two. I'm sure you'll agree that the PAL version destroys the NTSC version.

So, overall, I give the PAL version of Sonic CD a perfect 10 out of 10. I give the NTSC version of Sonic CD 8.75 out of 10. Game-play wise, they are perfect and fully equal to **SMW**. They are both highly recommended and are very different in style to all other Sonic games of the period. It's only that the NTSC (which is far more common in America, being, you know, the only version sold here) version has a horrible soundtrack that I can't stand enough that I went and paid $350 for a full PAL setup last year.

## Home School vs. Public School

Stephanie Durham, Senior

Most teenagers today don't exactly jump at the thought of going to school each morning, myself included. But just think for a minute about how you would feel if you couldn't. Just think for a minute about being home schooled. At first the idea sounds kind of cool. You probably get to sleep later in the mornings, you don't really have to get out of bed and get dressed and you won't get homework, so what's the downfall?

Can you imagine school without homecoming, prom, sporting events, etc. You and your home school mom don't have a football team.

A study comparing home schooled teenagers to public school teenagers showed that most home schooled kids don't do as well in college as their public school counterparts. Home schooled kids also don't have guidance counselors to help with college stuff. Where do home school kids learn about diversity and tolerance? Public schools help prepare kids for the real world. Home schools really can't.

## Movie Review
## Appleseed

Danielle Mammano, Junior

I finally got around to picking up this movie. Let me tell you, it is phenomenal! This is an anime film, directed by Shinji Aramaki, the director of **Bubblegum Crisis** (another great one). **Appleseed** is based on the graphic novels created by Shirow Masamune, the creator of the legendary sci-fi movies and series **Ghost in The Shell**. **Appleseed** takes place in futuristic Earth's last city Olympus. After the global war, Bioroids were created, synthetic beings with suppressed emotions whose sole purpose is to keep mankind's unstable, war-starting emotions in check. Such Bioroids have no reproductive functions and must undergo a life extension procedure every year or so, using the DNA of a great general that was the basis of all Bioroid creation.

When an attack destroys all the DNA used to keep the Bioroids alive and her friend Hitomi begins to die because of it, Deunan Newt must remember her past to unlock the secret to finding Appleseed, a program that can reactivate Bioroid reproductive functions and ultimately save the entire race. With the help of her boyfriend Briareos, who after being mortally wounded is now 73% machine, Deunan slowly uncovers her past in this sci-fi action adventure.

This particular film is done in a very unique manner: in the style of *"3-D anime"*. Any readers who watch **Ghost in the Shell: Standalone Complex** on anime night on <u>Cartoon Network</u> (every Saturday) know what it is; the animators used it to make the music video played before each episode. For those who don't, 3D anime is basically drawn and colored like regular, 2D anime, but it is animated with 3D programs. In other words it looks pretty freakin' cool. With Matrix-style freeze frame fight scenes and some of the most unique Mech Units (human piloted robots) I've ever seen. **Appleseed** is a must see for the sci-fi fan.

**The pros:** The use of 3D animation gives more life and brilliance to the film. The detail is fantastic; in some scenes, buildings and explosions look real.

**The cons:** The mouth movements don't prominently form the words the characters are speaking and the expressions could be a bit more intense. The creators being new to computer graphic animation, I can understand why this is, but I have to critique it anyway. Deunan looks somewhat bored whenever she screams, when her expression should really change dramatically. The mouth formations have nothing to do with the assumption the movie is dubbed over; it isn't. With CG works, they usually go back and rework the mouth movements to fit English words. While we Americans have been sloppy with dubbing old kung-fu movies, we take our time when dubbing a CG animated film.

Because of the slight flaws, **Appleseed** gets an 8/10 from me. Definitely a good watch. The graphics put into the creation of Olympus blew me away.