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Review Essay

Sonic Prime: Season 2

I love Sonic the Hedgehog. It must be said first and foremost before entering a topic in which I spread my opinion about it, I've been a fan since I was a baby, I've played a lot of the video games, I've seen the American "Adventures of Sonic the Hedgehog" TV show, I've scoured for facts on everything Sonic related, aside from the Archie published comics, I've even been invested in the intriguing fan content, more specifically the fan games, including but not limited to games like "Sonic GT," "S&K Newtrogic Panic," "Sonic Robo Blast 2," and "Sonic Storm." Needless to say, I love this blue blur to Sonic the Hedgehog's (2006) Crisis City and back, therefore, as much as I will try to be as unbiased as possible, there may be situations in which my bias becomes apparent, however it may not disrupt the review itself. With that being said, I can undoubtedly say this second season is of a much higher quality and has left me more overjoyed than the first season. I feel this season handles not just characters, or new added designs, as correctly as it could, but improves on multiple aspects mentioned by most of the fanbase in the first season.

First and foremost, the animation has improved compared to the last season, at least the shots and character movements have been. Character poses are clearer to read this time around and are far more appealing to the character's anatomical proportions, big heads, hands and feet are positioned and animated with intent. For example, the scene with the fight against the Pirate Crew and the Eggforcers show off appealing and fitting character movements and poses, like when Sonic is hit and drops the prism shard over the water, he looks around him with genuine confusion on his face, with the only parts of his body necessary and large, head and hands, move quickly and without reason to better convey his confusion while he is the only visible character on screen. The show also takes heavy advantage of the fact that the characters themselves are anthropomorphic toon animals, though they have somewhat human like features, their animation is not tied to the laws of physics or isn't in the realm of realistic possibility, like in the same scene, though earlier, Sonic is initially stealing the prism shard, he stretches his legs out unnaturally while hanging from the side of the watcher's viewpoint. This would not be possible in the slightest, however, as Sonic is a toon character, it presents itself as a comedically appealing scenario. Animation for the Sonic The Hedgehog series can be extraordinarily hard, the anatomy of the character, though lending benefits, can provide difficult challenges in expressing emotion, not necessarily the character's, to the viewer, like the uncanny movements of Sonic Adventure 2's motion captured animation, or the stiff nature of Sonic Forces' animation, so seeing the animation finally reach a level that can be seen as highly appealing is a feat. However, the animation at times can feel too exaggerated, as if it was unnecessary to animate it like so, however this is not as apparent as you may think, it could be disregarded by a normal viewer. A factor that cannot be disregarded, however, is the characterization and plot.

The characterizations this time around feel a lot more fleshed out, especially with the addition of Sonic's foil character, Shadow the Hedgehog. Sonic's characterization in the first season was whimsical and childish, maybe a little too much, this left fans devastated that their character is exaggerated to the extreme, however, with the introduction of Shadow, this exaggeration makes the foil characterization much clearer. Shadow the Hedgehog's image has been tainted over the years by constant inaccurate characterizations, depicting the hedgehog as a grumpy and edgy character, however this characterization cannot be farther from the truth. In his initial appearance in 2001's Sonic Adventure 2, Shadow is seen constantly presenting himself as a part of the evil side of the cast with a higher, if not equal, role as the supposed leader, Dr. Eggman, this does not mean Shadow is egotistical, nor does his dialogue present himself as "grumpy," it simply means that he is serious about his business and he prefers to have it done, not just as quickly as possible, but as efficiently as possible too. This attitude is probably garnered from his tragic backstory involving his best friend, Maria Robotnik, which resulted in him resenting humanity and wanting to take any opportunity to get back at it as soon as possible. Ever since the release of the game Shadow the Hedgehog in 2005, which presented players with an inaccurate characterization, his personality has been boiled down to an edgy version of Sonic, which in this day and age is treated as a joke, much like the humor of Sonic, leading to other official media being affected, such as the series' IDW published comics or his inclusion in other games. However, recent media like this Netflix show, seem to take Shadow in the more serious route and present him as a true opposite to Sonic, Shadow knows that the reason they're in the predicament is because Sonic can't seem to take his task seriously enough, if he did, their world would still exist, and others wouldn't be tampered with as well, so he decides to see if he can take the matter into his own hands and fix their world himself, as he knows the gravity of the situation and what he must do. The characterization of Shadow presents an obvious foil to Sonic's exaggerated childish and unserious nature, though seeming as a force of evil at first, with further watching of the first episode, his reasonings become entirely understandable for the plot.

Speaking of the plot, this season's plot is much more coherent than the first. The first season presented the viewers with constant switching between settings and characters, making it harder to get a better grasp on what may be happening at the current moment, leaving the viewer to possibly forget scenes. This is exactly the biggest flaw I noticed with the show when the second season was first revealed, as I couldn't remember what exactly happened in the correct order during the first season, as it was jumbled all over the place. It could be representative of Sonic's current confusing situation, but it left a less enjoyable experience to viewers like me. However, with the second season, there is much less world-hopping, leaving chunks of episodes of the season to the same setting, as Sonic's objective now is no longer to figure out what is happening, but to instead find the prism shards across the few different worlds they have been to in order to reconstruct their original world, before the Chaos Council, a band of five Dr. Eggman knockoffs, get to them first. The season ends with a newly met friend, Nine, betraying Sonic as his views of what he would like to do with the prism shards conflict with Sonic's objective of restoring his old world, making Nine believe that Sonic cannot and will not be an actual friend, and so he leaves with the shards to another world called "The Grim" in

hopes of starting a new by himself. This cliffhanger is extraordinarily interesting as throughout the season, or better yet, the whole show, it puts an emphasis on Sonic and his friendly and trusting personality to create resolutions to certain problems, then flips it on its head and uses it as a way to create a conflict that likely must be solved in a way that will not satisfy both parties. This increased tension in the plot greatly leaves the viewers, including myself, with a sense of shock, leaving us on our couches and beds, sore bottoms and backs, with nothing to do as we wait idly for the next over half a year for another season. The show's second season overall has provided me with satisfaction for fixed issues and left me awaiting the following ones with excitement as I continue to wonder how the characters' predicament could get resolved and how the production quality of the show may increase to provide better animation, perfect writing, and even more outstanding plot.