

= Sonic & Knuckles =

Sonic & Knuckles ( Japanese : ????? & ????? , Hepburn : Sonikku to Nakkuruzu ) is a platform video game developed by Sonic Team and published by Sega for the Sega Genesis . Released on October 18 , 1994 , it is the fourth installment in the main Sonic the Hedgehog series and a direct sequel to Sonic the Hedgehog 3 . It follows Sonic the Hedgehog and Knuckles the Echidna in their respective quests to save Angel Island ; Sonic tries to prevent Dr. Robotnik from relauching his orbital weapon , the Death Egg , while Knuckles scuffles with Robotnik 's minion , EggRobo .

Sonic 3 and Sonic & Knuckles were originally intended to be a single game . However , due to time constraints and the cost of a large @-@ memory @-@ capacity cartridge , Sega split the game in two . The Sonic & Knuckles cartridge uses " lock @-@ on technology " that allows the game to connect to Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and Sonic the Hedgehog 3 , so that elements of both Sonic & Knuckles and the locked @-@ on game are combined .

Critics were impressed with the lock @-@ on technology and hailed Sonic & Knuckles as " an exceptional game " despite its similarity to its predecessor . It has since been rereleased in various compilations and on online platforms such as Xbox Live Arcade , the Wii Virtual Console and Steam .

= = Plot = =

The game follows Sonic the Hedgehog and Knuckles the Echidna in their respective quests to save Angel Island . Sonic 's side of the story picks up immediately after the events of Sonic the Hedgehog 3 , where Dr. Robotnik 's orbital weapon , the Death Egg , is damaged in a battle with Sonic and crash @-@ lands back onto Angel Island , landing in a volcanic crater . Sonic travels through each zone looking to retrieve the Chaos Emeralds to defeat Robotnik , and once again comes into conflict with Knuckles , who believes Sonic is trying to steal the Emeralds for himself .

In Hidden Palace Zone , Sonic fights and defeats Knuckles . The two hear a disturbance outside of the chamber , and go out to find Dr. Robotnik stealing the Master Emerald , the secret to the island 's levitation powers . Knuckles attempts to attack Robotnik , but is electrically shocked in the process , and is trapped with Sonic in an underground passage . Knuckles , realizing Sonic is on his side , shows him a portal that leads them to Sky Sanctuary , where the Death Egg is relauching .

At Sky Sanctuary , Sonic battles against Robotnik 's robotic EggRobo minions and Mecha Sonic . Mecha Sonic is left behind in a damaged state as Sonic boards the relauching Death Egg . Robotnik uses the power of the Master Emerald to fuel a giant mech , but Sonic uses the power of the Chaos Emeralds to transform into Super Sonic . Super Sonic stops Robotnik , destroys the Death Egg , and returns the Master Emerald to its rightful place . If the player collects all the Chaos Emeralds , an ending is shown where a lone EggRobo rises from the wreckage of Robotnik 's mech . This leads into Knuckles ' story .

Knuckles ' story begins in Mushroom Hill , where he is relaxing with his animal friends but is interrupted by a bomb dropped by EggRobo . This prompts Knuckles to chase after him , leading him through most of the same zones Sonic went through . The chase ends at Sky Sanctuary , where Mecha Sonic attacks Knuckles but accidentally destroys EggRobo instead . After a short fight , Mecha Sonic uses the power of the Master Emerald to achieve a Super form similar to Sonic 's . Knuckles manages to defeat Super Mecha Sonic , who blows up . Sonic flies in piloting the biplane Tornado and Knuckles hitches a ride to return the Master Emerald to Angel Island . If all the Chaos Emeralds are collected , Angel Island rises upwards , into the sky . However , if the player has not collected all the Chaos Emeralds , Knuckles cannot redeem the Master Emerald , and Angel Island plummets into the ocean .

= = Gameplay = =

Since Sonic & Knuckles and Sonic the Hedgehog 3 were developed initially as a single title , their gameplay is similar : both are 2D , side @-@ scrolling platformers with similar level design ,

graphics , and game mechanics . However , in Sonic & Knuckles , unlike in Sonic 3 , the player chooses either Sonic or Knuckles at the title screen . The game differs from Sonic 3 in that Miles " Tails " Prower is not available to select , and the player cannot control two characters together or use any multiplayer modes . There is also no save feature .

The player character moves through eight levels , each divided into two acts . The first act of each level is punctuated by a miniboss fight with one of Dr. Robotnik 's robots , while the second ends with a regular boss fight with Robotnik , and there is a final boss fight with Robotnik at the game 's end . The two characters traverse levels differently : Sonic can jump slightly higher , is faster and can use the Insta @-@ shield ability returning from Sonic 3 which makes him invincible for a split @-@ second , but Knuckles can glide ? by letting the wind run under his dreadlocks , break fragile walls and climb most walls . The levels also include a few cutscenes that differ based on the character selected , as Sonic and Knuckles are rivals for most of the game .

The game contains two types of " Bonus Stages " , both accessed by passing a checkpoint with at least 20 rings . The first type has the character orbit around floating , glowing spheres , jetting off each one when a button is pressed , while a fence of light approaches from the bottom and will remove the player from the stage if touched . Collecting 50 rings in this stage earns the player a continue . The second type involves bouncing around a room with a slot machine in its center with the intention of winning extra lives and power @-@ ups from it . The amount of rings held by the player determines which bonus stage is accessed . This is made visible by the colour of the stars floating around the checkpoint , red denoting the glowing spheres stage and yellow denoting the slot machine stage .

Special Stages are entered by finding giant rings hidden in secret passageways : the player is placed in a 3D environment and tasked to turn all of a number of blue spheres red by running through them , but must avoid all red spheres , including formerly blue ones . Completing this task earns the player a Chaos Emerald , and collecting all seven Emeralds allows the player to turn into Super Sonic or Super Knuckles , more powerful versions of the characters . These special stages feature yellow spheres that bounce the player long distances .

= = = Lock @-@ on technology = = =

Sonic & Knuckles features " lock @-@ on technology " that lets the game access data from Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and Sonic the Hedgehog 3 so that elements of both Sonic & Knuckles and the locked @-@ on game are combined . To play these combined games , the hatch on top of the Sonic & Knuckles cartridge can be flipped open and the second game placed inside .

When Sonic 3 is used in this manner , it enables the player to play through both games as one , titled in @-@ game as Sonic 3 & Knuckles . This features several additions to the games not otherwise available , such as slight changes to the level design , being able to play through Sonic 3 levels as Knuckles or Sonic & Knuckles levels as Tails , and the ability to save progress in all of the game 's levels . Additionally , locking @-@ on is the only way to collect " Super Emeralds " , which are earned by accessing Special Stages in the Sonic & Knuckles levels after collecting all seven Chaos Emeralds from Sonic 3 . When all Super Emeralds have been collected , Sonic , Knuckles , and Tails can transform into Hyper Sonic , Hyper Knuckles , and Super Tails respectively , each with unique abilities . Inserting Sonic 2 unlocks Knuckles the Echidna in Sonic the Hedgehog 2 , wherein the player can complete Sonic 2 using Knuckles ' abilities .

If the player attaches the original Sonic the Hedgehog or Sonic Compilation , a screen with Sonic , Tails , Knuckles , and Robotnik stating " No Way " repeatedly is displayed . The player can also access a minigame based on Sonic 3 's and Sonic & Knuckles 's Chaos Emerald Special Stages by pressing the Genesis ' A , B , and C buttons together . Here , the player can enter a twelve @-@ digit code , with every number combination generating a different variation of a Special Stage . This game is named Blue Sphere in Sonic Mega Collection . If any other game is inserted , the " No Way " screen is displayed with faded colors . However , by pressing the A , B , and C buttons together , the player can access a randomly generated Blue Sphere stage .

## == Development ==

Sonic & Knuckles was developed at the Sega Technical Institute by members of Sonic Team in the United States . It and Sonic 3 were originally planned to compose a single story within the same cartridge . However , due to time constraints and the fact that the manufacturing costs of a cartridge with more memory would have been prohibitively expensive for Sega , the decision was made to split the planned game in half , with Sonic & Knuckles as the second part of the Sonic 3 story @-@ arc .

According to Roger Hector , vice @-@ president and general manager of Sega Technical Institute , the idea of the lock @-@ on technology was first conceived two and a half years before the release of Sonic & Knuckles , between the releases of Sonic the Hedgehog and Sonic the Hedgehog 2 . Early development screenshots suggest Knuckles was planned to be playable in the first Sonic the Hedgehog via Sonic & Knuckles ' lock @-@ on technology , but this feature was removed prior to release .

Prior to the release of Sonic & Knuckles in North America , Blockbuster Video and MTV co @-@ sponsored a tournament contest where children were allowed to play a pre @-@ release of the game , leading up to a final tournament held at Alcatraz Island in San Francisco , California , with a winning prize of \$ 25 @,@ 000 and the title " The World 's Most Hardcore Gamer " . The two finalists were additionally awarded a copy of every Sega product released for the next year . MTV broadcast the finale of this tournament along with other footage of the game ; titled " MTV 's Rock the Rock " , this video was aired shortly before the game 's release . The game was released worldwide on October 18 , 1994 .

## == Alternate versions and ports ==

### === Compilation releases ===

Sonic & Knuckles has been released as part of numerous compilations of Sega games including Sonic Jam ( 1997 ) for the Sega Saturn ; Sonic & Knuckles Collection ( 1997 ) and Sonic & Garfield Pack ( 1999 ) for the PC , Sonic Mega Collection ( 2002 ) for the Nintendo GameCube ; Sonic Mega Collection Plus ( 2004 ) for the PlayStation 2 , Xbox , and PC ; Sonic 's Ultimate Genesis Collection ( 2009 ) for the Xbox 360 and PlayStation 3 ; and Sonic Classic Collection ( 2010 ) for the Nintendo DS .

Sonic Jam , in addition to featuring the original release , included some new " remix " options to modify the game : " Normal " mode alters the layout of rings and hazards and " Easy " mode removes certain acts entirely from the game . The version in Sonic 's Ultimate Genesis Collection does not retain the lock @-@ on feature included in other versions of the game , because of " tight development times " .

### === Digital releases ===

The game has been re @-@ released through the Wii 's Virtual Console and Xbox 360 's Xbox Live Arcade . Both releases are programmed such that , if any of the " Lock @-@ on " games are also downloaded on the same account , the " connected " versions of the game are also available . For example , if one downloads Sonic & Knuckles and Sonic 2 , they have the option to play the corresponding Knuckles in Sonic 2 game . When the PC version was released via the Steam software , the games were released together as Sonic 3 & Knuckles as originally intended , with the player ( even if playing as Tails ) simply continuing at the beginning of Sonic & Knuckles after finishing Sonic 3 .

## == Reception ==

Critics praised Sonic & Knuckles , despite its similarity to its predecessor . The four reviewers of Electronic Gaming Monthly named it their " Game of the Month " . They lauded the lock @-@ on technology and remarked that despite that being " more of the same , it still is an exceptional game . " A reviewer of GamePro , who gave it a perfect score , commented that the ability to play as Knuckles makes it essentially two games on a single cartridge , the game is more challenging than Sonic 3 , and the ability to hook the cartridge up to Sonic 2 and 3 makes those games " worth playing again . "

Critics praised the lock @-@ on technology the game offered . Lucas Thomas of IGN said it was " a great game on its own " , but the lock @-@ on feature completely revamped the overall experience . Dan Whitehead of Eurogamer preferred Sonic & Knuckles to Sonic 3 , stating that he could not fully appreciate its predecessor without its " companion piece " . Sega Power 's review praised the game 's harder difficulty in comparison to its predecessor and the new expansion of levels , admitting that the expansion would not have been possible had Sonic 3 been a single game . Sega Magazine 's review similarly praised the lock @-@ on technology and the new innovation the unique cartridge offered , adding that Sonic & Knuckles ' hidden stages and bosses would strongly add to the replay value of the combined title .

Reviewing the Virtual Console release , Nintendo Life writer James Newton praised its support for the old lock @-@ on feature of the original release , claiming that the game does not truly shine without having purchased Sonic the Hedgehog 2 and 3 to activate this feature . Thomas praised the game for " impressive visuals that pushed the Genesis to its limits " and for the value added in the content unlocked with the lock @-@ on technology .

The Genesis version sold 1 @. @ 24 million copies in the United States .

= = Legacy = =

For the series ' twentieth anniversary in 2011 , Sega released Sonic Generations , a game that remade aspects of various past games from the franchise . A remake of the Sky Sanctuary stage was made for the Xbox 360 , PlayStation 3 , and PC versions of the game , while the Mushroom Hill level was remade for the Nintendo 3DS version of the game . Sonic & Sega All @-@ Stars Racing features a track inspired by the Death Egg as downloadable content along with the Metal Sonic character . Sonic & All @-@ Stars Racing Transformed also features Sky Sanctuary as a racetrack , with the Death Egg track returning for this game .