Sonic Advance

Sonic Advance[a] is a 2001 platform game developed by Dimps for the Game Boy Advance (GBA). It was the first *Sonic the Hedgehog* game released on a Nintendo console and was produced in commemoration of the series' tenth anniversary. The story follows Sonic, Tails, Knuckles, and Amy as they journey to stop Doctor Eggman from taking over the world. Controlling a character, players are tasked with completing each level, defeating Eggman and his robot army, and collecting the seven Chaos Emeralds.

Development began after Sega shifted its focus to third-party software development, due to the poor performance of the Dreamcast console. Sega recruited Dimps to lead development, making the game the first in the franchise developed by the studio. While *Sonic Advance* follows a similar style of gameplay to the Sega Genesis *Sonic* games, certain concepts and designs were reused from newer games such as *Sonic Adventure* (1998). The game has been ported to Nokia's N-Gage and Android devices, and is available on the Wii U via the Virtual Console in Japan.

Sonic Advance received positive reviews for its graphics, character animations, and similarity to the original Genesis games, but was criticized for its short length and special stages. It was a major commercial success, selling 1.21 million copies in the United States and is among the GBA's bestselling games. Dimps has since created many *Sonic* games, including *Sonic Advance 2* (2002) and *Sonic Advance 3* (2004).

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Developer(s)	Dimps Sonic Team
Publisher(s)	JP: Sega NA: THQ EU: Infogrames
Director(s)	Akinori Nishiyama
Producer(s)	Yuji Naka Hiroshi Matsumoto
Artist(s)	Yuji Uekawa
Composer(s)	Tatsuyuki Maeda Yutaka Minobe
Series	*Sonic the Hedgehog*
Platform(s)	Game Boy Advance, N-Gage, Android, Mobile phone
Release	**Game Boy Advance** JP: December 20, 2001 NA: February 3, 2002 PAL: March 8, 2002 **N-Gage** WW: October 7, 2003 **Android** JP: November 25, 2011 **J2ME**

Gameplay

Sonic Advance is a side-scrolling platformer action game reminiscent of the original *Sonic the Hedgehog* games released for the Sega Genesis.[1] Players journey through an island to defeat Doctor

Gameplay screenshot showing Sonic in one of the game's levels

WW: 2011	
Genre(s)	Platform, action
Mode(s)	Single-player, multiplayer

Eggman, who is attempting to capture its animal population to turn them into evil robots. Players select one of four characters, each with their own unique set of moves. Sonic the Hedgehog is fastest and can perform an "insta-shield" that protects him for a moment; Tails can fly or swim for a short time; Knuckles the Echidna can glide through the air, swim above water for a few seconds and climb walls; and Amy Rose can destroy enemies using a hammer.[2] Except for Amy, each character can defeat enemy robots by jumping and curling into a ball, or by performing a spin dash on the ground to gain speed. By entering a cheat code, players can control Sonic while Tails runs alongside him, similar to *Sonic the Hedgehog 2* (1992).[3]

The game takes place over six levels called zones. Each zone is split into two acts, where the player must guide their selected character past enemies and obstacles such as spikes and bottomless pits to reach the end in under ten minutes. Scattered around acts are springboards, boost pads, and golden rings, which serve as a form of health; players survive hits as long as they have at least one ring, but their rings will scatter and disappear after a short period.[1] Players collect canisters that contain power-ups such as speed shoes, elemental shields, and invincibility.[3] The first act ends when players pass a signpost, and the second culminates in a boss fight with Eggman; after hitting him eight times, Eggman will flee and drop a capsule of captured animals. Each character starts the game with a number of lives, which are lost when they are hit with no rings in their possession, crushed, drown, fall in a bottomless pit, or exceed an act's 10-minute limit. If all lives are lost, they will receive a game over.[1]

Special springs can be found near the top of certain acts.[2] By jumping on them, the player can reach a special stage, where they are sent down a tube to collect rings. If they collect enough rings, the player receives a Chaos Emerald.[1] Collecting all seven Emeralds unlocks an extra boss fight. The game also features a minigame, Tiny Chao Garden, where players can raise Chao.[4] Players can transfer their Chao between the Tiny Chao Garden and the Chao Garden from the GameCube versions of *Sonic Adventure* and *Sonic Adventure 2*.[2] The game also features a competitive multiplayer mode, where up to four owners of the game can race to the end of a level or search for Chao.[4]

Development and release

In January 2001, Sega, facing financial troubles with the underperformance of its Dreamcast console, shifted from first to third-party software publishing,[5] with Sony Computer Entertainment's PlayStation 2 and Nintendo's Game Boy Advance (GBA) being primary focuses.[6] A team of developers was formed to begin development on *Sonic the Hedgehog Advance* (later renamed *Sonic Advance*), a *Sonic* game for the GBA to commemorate the series' 10th anniversary.[7][8] Dimps, a studio formed by several former Neo Geo Pocket Color developers and funded by Sega, Sony, and Bandai, developed the game with assistance from Sonic Team.[9] Sonic Team conceived the game, but was understaffed on employees familiar with the GBA hardware and so recruited Dimps.[10] Several Dimps members worked on the critically acclaimed *Sonic the Hedgehog Pocket Adventure* (1999) for the Neo Geo Pocket Color.[9]

Sonic Advance was developed for Nintendo's Game Boy Advance handheld console

The developers decided to return to a gameplay style similar to the original Genesis *Sonic* games, which Naka felt was refreshing. Despite this, they also incorporated concepts from Sonic Adventure (1998) and Sonic Adventure 2 (2001), such as the ability to grind on rails and the modernized character designs by Yuji Uekawa.[11][12] As the *Sonic* games released for the Dreamcast allowed players to download minigames onto the Visual Memory Unit (VMU), the development team decided to expand upon this by using a similar concept with the GameCube's GBA link cable, making *Sonic Advance* one of the first games to use the cable.[13] It also features graphical techniques such as rotation effects and Mode 7.[4]

Sega announced *Sonic Advance* and two other GBA games on January 30, 2001.[b][14] A video containing footage of the game's first level was featured at the Electronic Entertainment Expo (E3) in May 2001,[15] and demo versions were showcased at Nintendo Space World and the Tokyo Game Show later that year.[13][16] Sega released *Sonic Advance* in Japan on December 20, 2001,[17] while THQ released it in North America on February 3, 2002. The game was released in Europe on March 8, 2002,[4] where Infogrames handled marketing and distribution.[18] A port for Nokia's N-Gage, *SonicN*, was released worldwide on October 7, 2003.[19] In 2005, it was compiled with *ChuChu Rocket!*, *Sonic Pinball Party,* and *Sonic Battle* in separate bundle packs for the GBA.[20][21][22] The game was released on Android on November 25, 2011, and on the Wii U's Virtual Console on February 18, 2015. Both of these rereleases are exclusive to Japan.[23][24]

Reception

Reception	
Aggregate score	
Aggregator	**Score**
Metacritic	87/100[25]
Review scores	
Publication	**Score**
AllGame	★★★★☆[12]
EGM	7.8/10[26]
Famitsu	32/40[27]
GamePro	17/20[28]
GameSpot	7.9/10[1]
IGN	9.1/10[2]
Nintendo Life	★★★★★★★★☆☆[29]
Nintendo World Report	8/10[4]

Sonic Advance received "generally favorable reviews", according to review aggregation website Metacritic.[25] The game sold 1.21 million copies in the United States, making it one of the bestselling games for the GBA.[30] It earned $36 million by August 2006. During the period between January 2000 and August 2006, it was the 12th highest-selling game launched for the GBA, Nintendo DS or PlayStation Portable in the United States.[31]

The game's presentation was well-received.[2][26] *Electronic Gaming Monthly* called *Sonic Advance* the best-looking 2D *Sonic* game.[26] *GameSpot* praised its detailed scenery and animation, describing them as solid and faithful to the original Genesis games.[1] *Nintendo World Report* described its use of graphical techniques as elegant, praising its anime-inspired character animations, and compared them positively to the critically acclaimed Super Nintendo Entertainment System game *Super Mario World* (1990).[4] The game's music and

audio was also praised;[2] *GameSpot* called it comfortable and catchy.[1] Reviewers also praised the gameplay, with many comparing it favorably to the original games. *IGN* wrote the game's new ideas, such as the ability to grind on rails, were clever and determined that *Sonic* felt better on the GBA, rather than the Genesis.[2] *AllGame* said the game relied too much on nostalgia, but felt it was still a "winning formula" and called the game enjoyable.[12] The game's use of the GameCube link cable was praised; *IGN* noted the replay value and variety it offered,[2] and *GameSpot* called it interesting, and felt it made good use of the GBA's connectivity to the GameCube.[1]

Certain elements received more mixed responses.[1][12] *GameSpot* felt that *Sonic Advance* lacked polish, and criticized the difficult special stages.[1] *IGN*'s only criticism was the presence of problems from earlier games, such as "an inviting stretch of roadway that begs to have your character blaze across it at top speed, only to have a spike strip jab you in the feet somewhere in the middle".[2] *Nintendo World Report* thought the game was too short and criticized the exclusion of the Super Sonic replay mode from earlier games.[4] Reviews for the N-Gage version were mixed; *GameSpot* criticized its choppy frame rate and encouraged readers to buy the superior GBA version instead.[32] *IGN* agreed and felt the N-Gage's vertical screen and omission of the multiplayer modes had a negative impact on the ported version.[33] Overall, reviewers felt *Sonic Advance* was a solid addition to the *Sonic* franchise. *Nintendo World Report* felt the game was not perfect, but was still a game that "deserves a spot in your GBA case".[4] *IGN* agreed, and stated the game successfully recaptured the spirit of classic *Sonic* gameplay while feeling unique and taking advantage of the GBA's capabilities.[2]

Legacy

In 2009, the *Official Nintendo Magazine* named *Sonic Advance* among the best games for Nintendo consoles.[34] *GamesRadar* called it the 13th best *Sonic* game in 2017.[35] The same year, *USgamer* named it the sixth best, stating that while it did not feel like the classic Genesis games, its graphics were "gorgeous", which helped make the game a standout for the franchise.[36]

Sonic Advance was the first *Sonic* game released for a Nintendo console.[15] *GamesRadar* considered this significant, as Nintendo and Sega were fierce rivals throughout the 1990s; *Sonic Advance* helped end this rivalry by "reducing Sonic's die-hard brand loyalty to a distant memory from the halcyon-toned 1990s".[35] The two companies worked closely in the following years, collaborating for the first time in 2003 with *F-Zero GX*. In 2007, both Sonic and Nintendo's mascot Mario featured in *Mario & Sonic at the Olympic Games*.[37] *Nintendo Power* wrote that Sonic—created as opposition to Nintendo—seemed at home on Nintendo consoles;[38] *GamesRadar* said Sega and Nintendo were now "like old friends".[35]

Sonic Advance was also the first *Sonic* game developed by Dimps. Sega continued to contract the company in following years to create many games in the series. The first of these were two sequels to *Sonic Advance*— *Sonic Advance 2* (2002)[39] and *Sonic Advance 3* (2004).[40] Dimps also developed the Nintendo DS games *Sonic Rush* (2005)[41] and *Sonic Rush Adventure* (2007),[42] the handheld versions of *Sonic Colors* (2010),[43] *Sonic Generations* (2011),[44] and *Sonic Lost World* (2013),[45] and co-developed *Sonic the Hedgehog 4* (2010) and the PlayStation 2 and Wii versions of *Sonic Unleashed* (2008) with Sonic Team.[46][47] Several journalists have noted that Dimps' handheld games have received consistently better reviews than Sonic Team's home console games.[35][48] *GamesRadar* wrote this was because Dimps "managed to keep the spirit" of the original games alive in theirs.[49]

Notes

a. Japanese: ソニックアドバンス, Hepburn: *Sonikku Adobansu*, known as **SonicN** on the N-Gage
b. The others were rereleases of *ChuChu Rocket!* (1999) and *Puyo Puyo* (1991)

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External links

- Official website (http://sonic.sega.jp/advance/) (in Japanese)