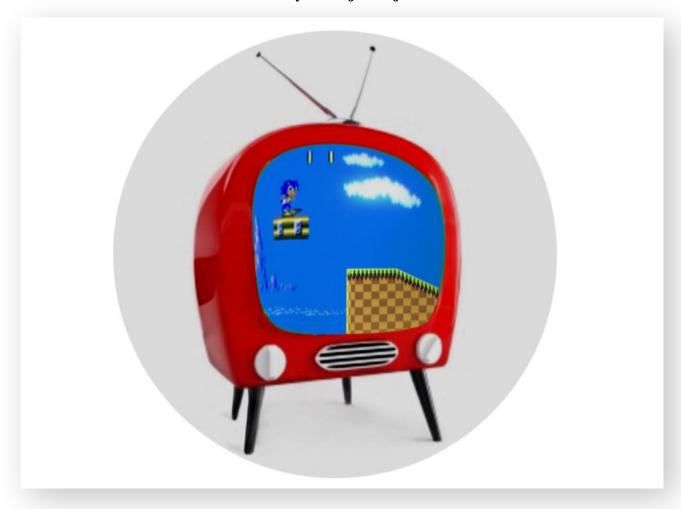# How Emulation of A Sega Classic Brought Me Back to my Childhood
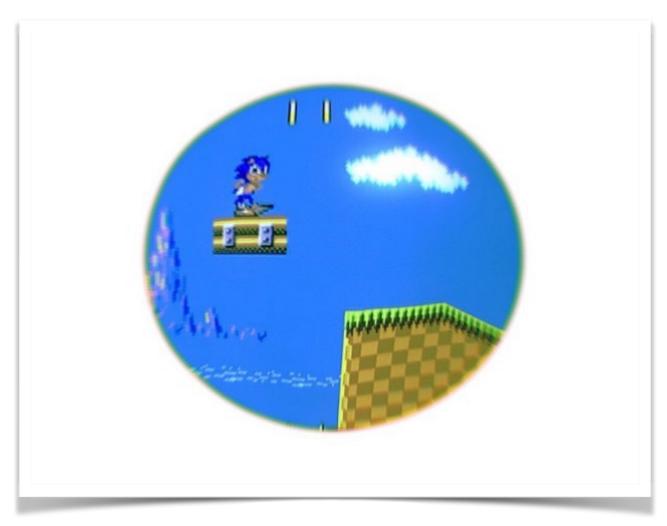
By Maciej Duraj

One of the best experience I have of gaming is when I discovered the original Sonic for the Master System and it was probably the first game in my life I completed all the way through to the end. I recently started to play this game on a Mac emulator with Apple EarPods and it really brought me back to that age of gaming when everything was original and many ideas not tried yet.

The rough time frame was early '90s probably '92. This was when I first laid my eyes and hands on the Master System. My uncle bought my cousin (although really for our whole family since we shared it) a Master System almost on a whim during a shopping spree in one of the larger retail stores in Poland at the time. The games that we also got with it was Michael Jackson's Moonwalker and Sonic.

The Master System never really took off, although I believe it was more popular in Europe than the U.S., because the NES dominated the gaming market during the 80s and very early 90s. It was not until the Sega Genesis started to take off in the U.S. in the mid 90s that Nintendo's dominance started to wane. It is a funny thing as I later emigrated to the U.S. as a kid and never saw anyone own a Master System there, but did see many other kids and households with Nintendos.

When I put that cartridge into the Master System's slot and started playing Sonic as a 7–9-year-old kid, I was truly mesmerised. I saw the lush green rolling hills and mountains in some of the level's backgrounds and felt part of the game. I also just loved the music and the little end level tune that stayed in my head over all those years.

Thus, when I started to play the game yesterday on my MacBook Air's emulator connected to my HDTV and either the HomePod speakers or EarPods, I was almost brought back to this era. I was as if brought back to the time in my life where my grandparents were both around and I was the happiest as my family was all together still. I played it as a kid in front of our TV set while my grandparents or other family members watched me play periodically and this couch and TV experience stayed with me over the years.

It was such a great memory for me and a way that truly introduced me to gaming besides the small booth arcades in Poland that existed at the time. I remember experiencing the first Shinobi this way and the game also stayed with me o er the years, although I never completed the arcade version of that game. I was mesmerized by these booth arcades as a kid and both of these memories were what drove me to my love of gaming.

It is interesting how a couple of experiences in gaming can truly stay with you for a lifetime and sometimes replaying such a game can take you back to such a time in your life. In a sense gaming back then was so full of potential and new still with a lot of ideas not even tried or discovered by developers.
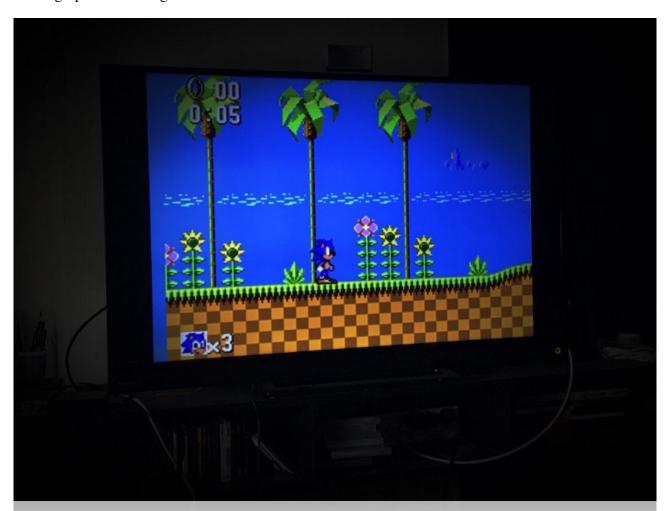
The original Sonic for the Master System still has a place in my heart that was never filled by any other subsequent Sonic games. I found the other entries in the series, even the Genesis variants,

inferior to that Master system original. I found them too focused on speed rather than platforming, meanwhile the Master System game is more about precision, platforming, being propelled into the air and finding all the secrets within the varied levels it offers.

Do not get me wrong, you can still propel Sonic from left to right when touching one of the game's boost pads. However, I have not seen any nor do I remember any loops on the ground existing that the Genesis and subsequent Sonic games were known for. In fact, found that during my last night's time playing the game, if you let yourself be propelled from a boost pad, you may just run into spikes on the ground just beyond the boost.

Thus, the game does not encourage just running quickly and going through scripted speedrun sections like the Genesis and subsequent versions of Sonic focused on. It is more about platforming and precision and this is why it still remains my favourite 2D Sonic game to date.

I also loved the original NES 2D Mario games and later Super Mario World, but the original Sonic had many things Mario would never do or mimick in any way. One example is the way you see enemies throwing projectiles and have to go under them to hit them from behind. Another example is the way the platforms move and how you have to time your jumps and land on tree stumps moving up or down to get to the other side.

It was a different yet also fun and challenging form of platforming. Playing the game also made me realize that sometimes the classics are worth revisiting as they not only bring you back to the time of gaming you found memorable, but you may discover a game that still holds up today and has aspects of it still not seen in the genre very often.

One of the reasons I started to play this game last night and again after all those years was because I found a wireless controller I had for the Playstation 3 worked perfectly with my Mac. I also wanted to see if I could game using my wireless EarPods and HomePod speaker and see what the experience was with emulation using such sound systems.

I found it great and as long as your online connection allows for 30MBs or more bandwidth (mine is 30 Mbps bandwidth), then it can be a great way to relive the old classics. Some of those older MIDI tunes sound great to the ear even today. The game studios of the time often had to find innovative ways to create music and sound within games as very few channels existed and sound capacities compared to today.

The Mac emulator I used to play the game, called OpenEmu, also offers interesting ways to relive such classics because it comes with a wide range of filters available for each system it supports and it supports many. You can play games all the way form the Master System to the Dreamcast with even the Saturn supported in terms of Sega's lineup of systems. Other systems like the Super Nintendo, the N64 and the original Playstation are also supported.

The Mac is not a great gaming system by itself, but through the use of emulation it can truly become one. Emulation in general can provide an interesting way to relive a past experience and one with added modern benefits such as introducing new sound to a game or even in-game filters.

Emulation can truly transform us to another time or era but with modern googles on. It also allows us to have a chance to play games we never experienced during this era or ones our friends had but not us. The Metroid series from Nintendo are such games for me. However, Sonic will always be the sidescroller dear to my heart.

Whether you have an original Master System at your disposal or an emulator, the original Sonic for the Master System is a game worth reliving or experiencing for the first time. Even today it plays well.