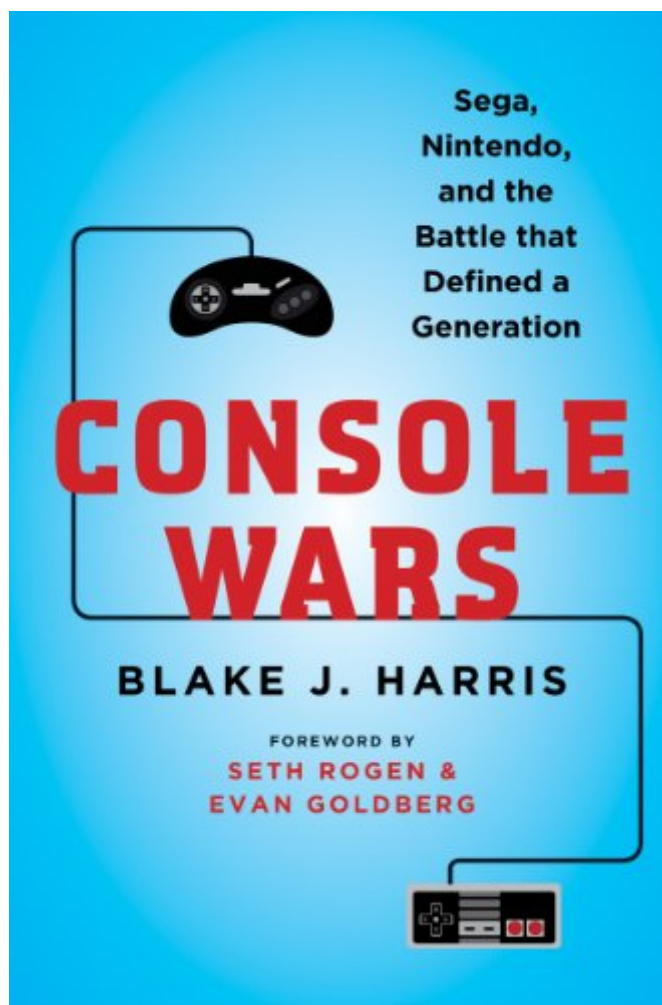


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Console Wars: Sega, Nintendo, And The Battle That Defined A Generation



Synopsis

A BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR: A NPR, Slate, Publishers Weekly, Goodreads Following the success of *The Accidental Billionaires* and *Moneyball* comes *Console Wars* – a mesmerizing, behind-the-scenes business thriller that chronicles how Sega, a small, scrappy gaming company led by an unlikely visionary and a team of rebels, took on the juggernaut Nintendo and revolutionized the video game industry. In 1990, Nintendo had a virtual monopoly on the video game industry. Sega, on the other hand, was just a faltering arcade company with big aspirations and even bigger personalities. But that would all change with the arrival of Tom Kalinske, a man who knew nothing about videogames and everything about fighting uphill battles. His unconventional tactics, combined with the blood, sweat and bold ideas of his renegade employees, transformed Sega and eventually led to a ruthless David-and-Goliath showdown with rival Nintendo. The battle was vicious, relentless, and highly profitable, eventually sparking a global corporate war that would be fought on several fronts: from living rooms and schoolyards to boardrooms and Congress. It was a once-in-a-lifetime, no-holds-barred conflict that pitted brother against brother, kid against adult, Sonic against Mario, and the US against Japan. Based on over two hundred interviews with former Sega and Nintendo employees, *Console Wars* is the underdog tale of how Kalinske miraculously turned an industry punchline into a market leader. It tells the story of how a humble family man, with an extraordinary imagination and a gift for turning problems into competitive advantages, inspired a team of underdogs to slay a giant and, as a result, birth a \$60 billion dollar industry.

Book Information

File Size: 5968 KB

Print Length: 587 pages

Publisher: Dey Street Books; Reprint edition (May 13, 2014)

Publication Date: May 13, 2014

Sold by: Digital Services LLC

Language: English

ASIN: B00FJ379XE

Text-to-Speech: Enabled

X-Ray: Enabled

Word Wise: Enabled

Lending: Not Enabled

Screen Reader: Supported

Enhanced Typesetting: Enabled

Best Sellers Rank: #374 Paid in Kindle Store (See Top 100 Paid in Kindle Store) #1 in Books > Business & Money > Processes & Infrastructure > Infrastructure #1 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Humor & Entertainment > Activities, Puzzles & Games > Video & Electronic Games #1 in Kindle Store > Kindle eBooks > Nonfiction > Science > Technology > General & Reference

Customer Reviews

It reads like a fascinating behind-the-scenes tale of intrigue, mistakes, brash decisions, and corporate espionage. Sometimes it's like a David vs. Goliath story, other times it's just a simple dinner conversation. But the part that really hooked me was remembering seeing all these decisions play out in my local retailer. Seeing the TV commercials and not thinking about the implications. It's like a history book in which I lived through the history and didn't even know it. If you were born in the early 80's, this book (much like the advertising campaigns) is laser-targeted right at you.

I have played video games for many years, and my first console was the GameCube. As a kid, my video game experience for a long time was Nintendo and Nintendo only. I was totally unaware of the existence of consoles like the master system and the Genesis. Reading this book has given me a great overview of this early turbulent history, where Nintendo basically owned the market and everybody else was nothing. In a sense, it reminds me of the story of Topps baseball cards from the 90's. Topps was the unquestioned leader, until many short lived competitors rose up to challenge them. Just like Topps, Nintendo emerged the victor after a hard fight. However, this does not mean that the story of competitors like Sega are insignificant. Without the struggle to trump Nintendo, we may never have had ratings systems like the ESRB, or competitive pricing in the game marketplace. Overall, this book is a great read for anybody who is willing to dive into the early history of video games.

This was a fun and interesting read about major changes in the gaming industry as well as the rise and fall of Sega of America. Granted, I am totally biased because I have a warm place in my heart for both Sega and Nintendo. I haven't really read many non-fiction books with this style (fictionalized first person conversations based off of interviews). This style made the story come alive for me, though I would imagine it may not be for everyone. This was a book that I not only enjoyed, but also made me dearly miss playing video games.

Console Wars largely chronicles the period between 1989 and 1995, when Sega battled Nintendo for dominance in the home console market, ending as Sony displaces Sega in the 32-bit era as Nintendo's main competitor. In a sense, it does serve as a sort of sequel to David Sheff's gold-standard account in "Game Over" of the rise of Nintendo in the 80's, which left off at the point where Sega's Genesis had just started to get a serious foothold in the market. However, the styles in which the two authors approach their subjects are very different, and it's interesting to compare them. Sheff's Game Over contained very little conversational dialogue. He wrote his book like a reporter: documenting scenes and incidents by describing the people and particulars involved, the content of what they said, and the effect of their interactions. His book was full of individual quotes, but the large majority of them were presented matter-of-factly as accounts made by the subject either directly to the author in interview, or to another source of record which Sheff was citing. In-scene "dialogue" was used sparingly, and mostly limited to short lines that reflected exactly what was known by the subject or other observers to have been said, or something very close to it. This gave Sheff's book a journalistic crackle, keeping the pace moving, the flow of information constant, and the level of authorial distance removed enough that the reader always maintained a panoramic view of the bigger picture, and didn't get bogged down in superfluous, artificial detail. In contrast, Harris's book is written like a screenplay, with full "scenes" that progress via elaborate, lengthy dialogues between "characters", while novel-esque, detailed stage directions record their precise movements and interior thoughts, all of which can only have been manufactured by the author (as he himself loosely admits in his author's note) based on the factual framework of an interaction that did occur. Where Game Over was a documentary, this book is much more a historical re-enactment. It's obvious that Harris already had a film in mind when he was writing, and the cinematically styled sharp, pithy dialogue (or at least, attempts at such), and conversational set-ups and payoffs were designed to translate easily to the eventual film. This may make the book more engaging than Sheff's reserved style for some, but I found it distracting and a little gratuitous. Irrelevant detail often gets in the way of what's interesting and entertaining about the information. That said, the information and voluminous research this book does contain is incredibly valuable, and makes for a truly rewarding read. The saga of the Sega and Nintendo battle in the US is as fascinating and provoking as any story the business world has to offer, and there's more than a little tragedy in seeing how Tom Kalinske and Sega of America were able to achieve a brilliant and improbable success, only to be cut off at their knees, in the end, by Sega of Japan. The often clumsily overwritten "reconstructed" dialogue by Harris makes me doubt I'd be interested in any fiction of his, but this particular subject matter is rich enough that my issue with his authorial indulgences is just a

quibble. This is by all means a book worth reading.

Fairly interesting for children of the 90s, but I thought it went on too long and spent too much time on some personal relationships in companies that didn't really seem to affect the historical record of the console wars. This book focuses mainly on Sega. A more apt title may have been, "Sega Against the World"

I'm not much of a gamer (although I own an Xbox) but I am a computer and tech history buff. This is a well written and entertaining read which will give the reader insight into the cut-throat business of gaming as well as a look back at the "good old days" when game and console developers lived the Bohemian lifestyle while developing technology what would impact generations to come. HIGHLY recommended.

A good history on the 8 and 16-bit era of consoles, and the continuous one-upmanship between the frontrunners of the industry at the time (Nintendo and Sega). Unfortunately, the timeline felt a bit confusing and a lot of the dialogue and depictions felt a bit embellished. Also, I feel quite a bit was embellished, and there was too much focus on Tom Kalinske's role and Sega's position as the industry underdog. It feels more like a character driven story with Kalinske as protagonist than a documentary or history on that generation of consoles. I'm glad I read it, but do take some of it with a grain of salt. Still completely worth a read if you're curious about the "behind the scenes" aspects of the 8 and 16-bit era Nintendo and Sega company politics.

What a fantastic read! I'm only half way through the book and so much has been revealed in how those involved in the actual products (development and marketing) overcame so many obstacles and suffered so many defeats in their quests to become the best console. Brings me back to days I spent playing the latest NES, SMS, Genesis, and Playstation games...

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