



Console Wars: Sega, Nintendo, and the Battle that Defined a Generation

By Blake J. Harris

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A BEST BOOK OF THE YEAR: 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's 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.

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Editorial Review

From [Booklist](#)

Starred Review At the dawn of the 1990s, Nintendo was the Goliath of the video-game industry. The company's strictures on third-party development and its policy of understocking retailers contributed to the stranglehold on the market. But Tom Kalinske, who had rejuvenated Barbie and created He-Man for Mattel, was about to change that as the president and CEO of Sega. Like the pixels that together create a larger picture, Harris presents the various elements of the business in vivid color, from research and development to marketing, to show how Sega went from a joke to a market leader in just a few years. Along the way, Harris reveals the forces behind such decisions as Nintendo changing red blood to gray sweat in Mortal Kombat; the origin story of the nickname for Sonic's sidekick, Tails; and even how Mario was supposed to be a certain spinach-guzzling sailor, in a manner that will engage both Gen X gamers and business-minded readers. Harris defines the players immediately, honing in on their most notable characteristics, and puts the reader in the thick of the meetings and deal-making with a confidence stemming from hundreds of interviews. Pegged for both documentary and feature-film adaptations, Console Wars is remarkably detailed and fast paced, pitting speedy Sonic against more-of-the-same Mario in a blow-by-blow account of the battle for supremacy in the burgeoning video-game industry. --Bridget Thoreson

Review

A riveting story full of colorful characters... a fascinating, illuminating history... an essential read. (Publishers Weekly (starred review))

A highly entertaining behind-the-scenes thriller. (Kirkus)

It's far and away one of the best non-fiction books I've ever read. (Forbes)

Like the pixels that together create a larger picture, Harris presents the various elements of the business in vivid color...remarkably detailed and fast paced. (Booklist)

Fast, fluid, and startlingly accessible. (Entertainment Weekly)

A fast-paced page-turner...it's exciting to finally get a no-holds-barred account of a history that has largely been kept secret from the public eye. (Wired)

A must-read. Period. (IGN)

From the Back Cover

Named a "Best Book of the Year" by NPR, Slate, *Publishers Weekly*, and Goodreads

It was a once-in-a-lifetime battle that pitted brother against brother, kid against adult, Sonic against Mario, and the United States against Japan. . . .

In 1990, Nintendo had a virtual monopoly on the videogame industry. Sega was a faltering arcade company with big aspirations and even bigger personalities. But all that would change with the arrival of former Mattel executive Tom Kalinske. His unconventional tactics, combined with the blood, sweat, and bold ideas

of his renegade employees, completely transformed Sega and led to a ruthless David-and-Goliath showdown with Nintendo. But Sega's success would create many new enemies and make Nintendo stronger than ever.

Blake J. Harris brings into focus the warriors, the strategies, and the battles and explores how they transformed popular culture forever. Ultimately, *Console Wars* is 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, give birth to a sixty-billion-dollar industry.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Kathy Natal:

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Patricia Baker:

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