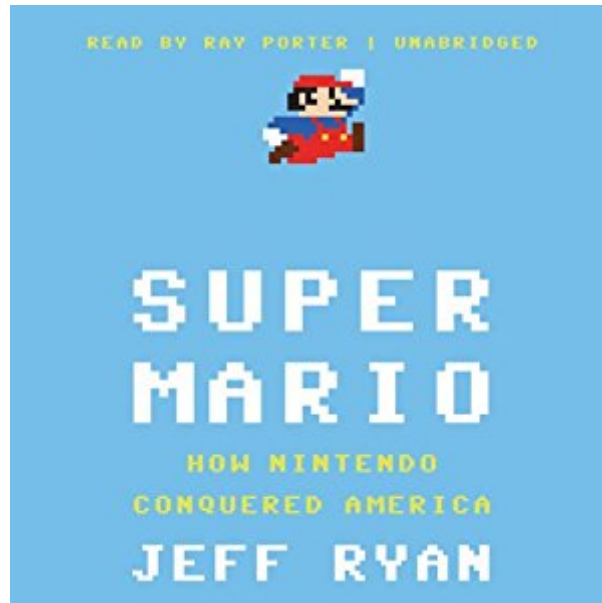


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Super Mario: How Nintendo Conquered America



Synopsis

The story of Nintendo's rise and the beloved icon who made it possible Nintendo has continually set the standard for video game innovation in America, starting in 1981 with a plucky hero who jumped over barrels to save a girl from an ape. The saga of Mario, the portly plumber who became the most successful franchise in the history of gaming, has plot twists worthy of a video game. Jeff Ryan shares the story of how this quintessentially Japanese company found success in the American market. Lawsuits, Hollywood, die-hard fans, and face-offs with Sony and Microsoft are all part of the drama. Find out about: Mario's eccentric yet brilliant creator, Shigeru Miyamoto, who was tapped for the job because he was considered expendable; Minoru Arakawa, the son-in-law of Nintendo's imperious president, who bumbled his way to success; and the unexpected approach that allowed Nintendo to reinvent itself as the gaming system for the nongamer, especially now with the Wii. Even those who can't tell a Koopa from a Goomba will find this a fascinating story of striving, comeuppance, and redemption.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

The best part of this book, by far, is the cover. It's an arresting piece of artwork for anyone who grew up with a Nintendo: Mario paused in mid-jump, a perfectly Nintendo shade of blue wallpapered behind him. It's an image that promises more than the book offers. The writing is clean and straightforward but far too often Ryan resorts to pop culture jokes (the intro to Sonic the Hedgehog is particularly brutal) or cultural stereotypes (in the section detailing with the creation of the first

Mario arcade game are the inevitable references to yin and yang and Japanese Zen). It's a style that should be familiar to anyone who's read Wired magazine. There are also a few spelling errors sprinkled throughout the book, nothing terrible, although Konami is referred to as Komani. As a history of Nintendo it's a worthy primer but don't expect anything as in-depth or meticulously researched as David Sheff's "Game Over: How Nintendo Conquered the World," from which "Super Mario" paraphrased a cover image and a subtitle. "Game Over" was a video game book but also a business book. At nearly 500 pages it offered a level of detail and character necessary to understand the under-scrutinized subject. Ryan too often focuses on the trivial and skates by the interesting; multiple page bios on historical footnotes like Captain Lou Albano and Billy Mitchell yet a single paragraph of background on Shigeru Miyamoto. For a more compelling look at the history of Nintendo and Miyamoto, I'd first refer one to "Game Over" and "Master of Play" by Nick Paumgarten from the New Yorker. Ryan's greatest mistake is in his disregard for any description of the actual act of playing video games. There's never any sense of what it's like to hold a controller in one's hands and play a game.

I am rarely moved to share my opinions on things, but there's a lot about this book that I can't keep quiet about. As far as the content of the book, I agree with what other reviewers have said in that the author's telling of Nintendo's history up until about the SNES, at most N64 era, is the book's strongest. For Nintendo's history after that, you're not much better off than asking a Gamestop employee for it. As for this writing style, I also felt he was trying too hard to be hip and witty and detracted from the book. To call a past Japanese NOA president "Grandpa Ojisan" (Grandpa grandpa?) and then Reggie Fils-Aime "Will Smith" was about as funny as a Hiroshima joke. But that's his writing style and I've already bought the book, and that's not what really bothered me. What really irked me with this book is the misinformation. This book seems more like a 200 page wikipedia entry than a published work. A few mistakes is forgivable but the amount this book has makes me wonder who proof-read it. For being written by a 'life-long gamer' and focusing on Nintendo, it's amazing how he can misspell the system that was the catalyst for video games throughout the whole book - the Famicom (FAMILY COMputer) not Famicon. Also, it's the DSLL (or DSXL), not DSX (it's still on store shelves for crying out loud). There's also a lot of other wrong info and misspellings, but a few standouts were claiming the original PSP had 16gb of memory built in, that the Xbox 360 and PS3 both required \$100 of extra charges to play online at launch, that the original Pokemon's types were fire, water and ice (assuming he was referring to Charmander, Squirtle and Bulbasaur) or claiming that both Final Fantasy and Dragon Quest were made by

Square during the N64 era.

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