



Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto

David Kushner

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Inside the making of a videogame that defined a generation: *Grand Theft Auto* *Grand Theft Auto* is one of the biggest and most controversial videogame franchises of all time. Since its first release in 1997, *GTA* has pioneered the use of everything from 3D graphics to the voices of top Hollywood actors and repeatedly transformed the world of gaming. Despite its incredible innovations in the \$75 billion game industry, it has also been a lightning rod of debate, spawning accusations of ethnic and sexual discrimination, glamorizing violence, and inciting real-life crimes. *Jacked* tells the turbulent and mostly unknown story of *GTA*'s wildly ambitious creators, Rockstar Games, the invention and evolution of the franchise, and the cultural and political backlash it has provoked.

Explains how British prep school brothers Sam and Dan Houser took their dream of fame, fortune, and the glamor of American pop culture and transformed it into a worldwide videogame blockbuster

Written by David Kushner, author of *Masters of Doom* and a top journalist on gaming, and drawn from over ten years of interviews and research, including firsthand knowledge of *Grand Theft Auto*'s creators and detractors

Offers inside details on key episodes in the development of the series, including the financial turmoil of Rockstar games, the infamous "Hot Coffee" sex mini-game incident, and more

Whether you love *Grand Theft Auto* or hate it, or just want to understand the defining entertainment product of a generation, you'll want to read *Jacked* and get the real story behind this boundary-pushing game.

Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto Details

Date : Published April 1st 2012 by Wiley

ISBN : 9780470936375

Author : David Kushner

Format : Hardcover 304 pages

Genre : Nonfiction, Games, Video Games, History, Sports and Games, Business, Gaming

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From Reader Review Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto for online ebook

Eugene says

great book on history of GTA game and is creators

history of GTA game and Rockstar and its founders. The book is pretty long for a business book and it is more entertaining and history. appreciate insights into important events

Josh says

Riddled with errors, both from a copyediting perspective (typos, transposed words, missing citations, notation of footnotes that don't exist) and a research perspective (quoting a review of GTA written in 2005 as reaction to the game's release in 1998, lots of uncited quotes listed as "a gamer" or "a reviewer"). Unfocused, with some odd tangents away from the development of the games or growth of Rockstar. Hyperbolic in praise of the Housers and occasional derision of gamers.

Rockstar Games and Grand Theft Auto have had a huge impact on not only video games, but on popular entertainment. It's a fascinating story - some English kids created the quintessentially American game and changed the industry - that deserves a better history than this.

David Ramirer says

sehr interessanter einblick in die spieleindustrie, mit betonung auf INDUSTRIE.
einerseits ist es faszinierend, wie die personen hinter den spielen an diese herangehen, andererseits entzaubert es das ganze ein wenig, wenn man detailliert sieht, wie sehr das alles in marketingmaschinen und industrielle vorgänge eingebunden ist.
da das aber jegliche form von kultur betrifft, leistet dieses buch einen wichtigen beitrag zur verortung von videospielen im kulturellen kontext.
fakt ist aber auch, dass abseits von gta und seinen ablegern wenige videospiele derart ausholen und was storytiefe und detailverliebtheit betrifft, so neue maßstäbe setzen.
sehr spannend zu lesen, teilweise ein wenig vorhersehbar - aber das ist die wirklichkeit ja meistens...

Ian says

Book was OK. Seemed to be trying to be a company history in the vein of 'The Accidental Billionaires' but I guess I wasn't quite as intrigued once I got into it and, I could be wrong but, I don't see Aaron Sorkin and David Fincher knocking on author, David Kushner's door looking to turn this into a movie any time soon.

Rockstar Games and the GTA franchise were undoubtedly major cultural touchstones of the first decade of the 21st century but to keep it 100: the company was run by a bunch of privileged and entitled British prep

school wannabes who idolized American pop culture like the Def Jam record label (or more specifically Rick Rubin's Def Jam like Russell Simmons didn't exist! :/), cribbed most of their best marketing ideas from the music industry, fetishized sex & violence and traded in stereotypes and sensationalism about cultures and lifestyles they knew nothing about in their games beyond their experiences of them via gangster & action movies and hip hop music. And frankly, apparently most of their games weren't, until way into their life cycle as a company, even that great.

Overall, an interesting read but I wonder if Sam Houser et al. have any real chops and can repeat their success. The ending of the book suggests not.

Rohit Raut says

This is a crazy story. The crazy story of the definitive entertainment product of our times. Long live GTA, and long live the freedom to create art that is divisive, provocative and fun. Just goddamn fun.

Anthony and Nicole says

Not at fun as Masters of Doom

A good read overall. If you like video game history this is a good one. However, I think the side stories found in Masters of Doom were more interesting.

Yuri Krupenin says

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Alexander Lisovsky says

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Shawn Hartley says

Good read if you have any interest in the video game market - specifically to Rockstar Games and the Grand Theft Auto series. The idea of the story being central to "it" can be applied beyond games to just about any content production outlet these days.

Fair coverage given to both the gamer & games as cinema side of the equation as well as Jack Thompson's campaign against violent games and youth. But in the end Thompson's campaign did more to unify the game companies and ratings boards to do a better job of policing themselves.

Coverage of the social "laws" by country in the run up to Grand Theft Auto - San Andreas was pretty interesting. Didn't realize how prudish "we" are compared to other countries.

Granted, I know this wasn't an official on-the-record history, but the flow was clunky at times. Too much detail in sideline stories, and slim narrative of some parts that could have been expanded upon...especially towards the end of the book.

Terrance says

If you followed gaming, Jack Thompson, or censorship in the 90's, this book isn't going to give you any revelations. It covers the rise of R* Games on the wave of popularity from the Grand Theft Auto Series with "inside" information about the corporate culture (wild partying frat boys forced to grow up) and a parallel history of Jack Thompson's crusade to censor video games. Of course, the climax (no pun intended) is the Hot Coffee fiasco and an emotional downer of breakup of the founders of the company. However, this is done in a very pro-R* tone throughout, giving enormous credit where only average credit was due and being more about the author's love of the company rather than the facts. In fact, the only new tidbit in this book was that R* was planning to release a patch for the sex scenes in San Andreas on their own, had the modding community not done it for them.

As a result, this book services only one audience well: the individual (likely founder) who provided the backstage information. It is full of hyperbole regarding the culture of R*, an almost reverential treatment of the CEO Sam Houser (until the bitter ending), and information gleaned from the Federal hearings into the Hot Coffee Scandal. As a fan of the GTA series, I've been under the impression for years that the Hot Coffee

mod was vastly over-covered and sensationalistic, and this book is trying to rekindle that same fire for one more go at sales. Shame on Mr. Kushner for that.

Even during its re-coverage of the Hot Coffee mod, the book lacks that critical thinking element that would have made it a good book. R* apparently told the world that the sex scenes were left in the game because it was too time consuming to rip them out at the end of the development cycle. This is accepted as near-Gospel truth by the author without even noticing that just a few chapters earlier he had described how the World Trade Center and other famous New York landmarks were ripped out of GTA:III in the wake 9/11. Rumour has long had it that there were missions also ripped out of that game (though if you're hoping to find some sort of answer to that question, do not bother with this book as it's not even hinted at), and the changes were made after the game had been finalized. Yet for some reason, R* claims that the sex mini-game in San Andreas could afford to be "wrapped" but not deleted before GTA:SA was even finalized, as it would have had other game-related repercussions. Even a decent critical review of the same tired old story would have probed this even more.

Overall this book is there. It exists, and probably could have been published by R* to create new controversy. But it's not what this GTA Gamer wanted to see and is a wild disappointment if you're looking for something beyond what is found in game-website archives across the internet.

Cullen Haynes says

In similar vein to Masters of Doom, Kushner's Jacked goes into the intriguing history behind one of the world's most polarising video game series; Grand Theft Auto.

From early days in UK, to making it big in NYC, Jacked is roller coaster ride where the truth is sometimes stranger than fiction.

Love them or hate them, Rockstar Games have definitely cemented themselves rebel innovators in a penchant for the extreme.

Richard Guion says

I always like reading about how things are made: movies, products, and video games. Jacked was especially tantalizing because I didn't really know much about Sam Houser, the chief behind Rockstar Games. This book has the full scoop on Houser, David Jones (from DMA who also created Crackdown), and other early staff members. One of the most devious and ingenious moments is how a veteran marketing executive uses politicians, upset over the violent game content, to market the very first Grand Theft Auto. When Houser moves his operation to New York City, it coincides with the development of GTA III, also set in New York. The development behind GTA III, Vice City, San Andreas is covered, along with the details on how the "Hot Coffee" mod code was left buried in the final release and how a hacker uncovered it. This scandal nearly brought down Take Two and Rockstar. Equal attention is given to some kids who may have been influenced by GTA to snipe at cars on a Tennessee highway. Jack Thompson's crusade against violent video games is also well detailed, and if you wondered why he hasn't been active lately, that is explained here too.

A few things I didn't like. At times this book felt like a compilation of magazine articles. I wish Kushner had included more details of the last GTA game, which was 100 times more immersive than any open world game to date. Kushner starts off chapters with a cute POV line bringing the readers attention into a scene like a video game, which mostly fell flat for me.

All in all, if you are a video game or Rockstar fan, this book is a must read.

Vincenzo Aversa says

Tra prostitute, vecchine spalmate e avvocati impazziti, la serie GTA ha senza dubbio segnato l'industria dei videogiochi degli ultimi anni. Spinti anche dal cattivo gusto e dalla smaniosa voglia di scandalizzare, quelli di Rockstar hanno, più di chiunque altro, sdoganato i videogiochi dal mondo degli idraulici per bambini. Eppure questo libro, che della storia della saga tenta di farne un romanzo epico, non funziona. Perché gli eroi di Doom brillavano proprio perché non si cercava di dipingerli come tali, mentre stavolta l'autore si lascia troppo spesso trascinare dalla voglia di arricchire e colorare gli eventi. Sbrigativa, imprecisa e non sempre confortata dalla presenza di aneddoti interessanti, la storia criminale di GTA è tempo rubato al videogioco.

Lara says

I figured I'd give this a try because I read Kushner's *Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture* a few years ago and loved it, even though I have never played Doom and don't have any interest whatsoever in ever playing Doom. I've actually played several GTA games, and enjoyed them somewhat, so I dunno, I thought I might actually like this book more just because I'm far more familiar with the games. Buuuuuut, no.

First of all, Sam and Dan Houser are just not anywhere near as interesting as John Romero and John Carmack, especially since it seems that Kushner completely forgot about Dan's existence for about 90% of the book. Part of what I loved about the *Doom* book is the way he talked about the Johns' personal lives and the ways they worked together, as well as details about the technical aspects of game creation. There was none of that here. As far as I gleaned from this book, Sam Houser didn't have any sort of a personal life at all, Dan...showed up at parties (?), and the games were basically created by Sam saying, "I know! Let's make this game even more shocking than the last one!" and then cracking the whip at all his fanboy minions and voila! GTA! We get way more personal information about Jack Thompson and his crusade against violent video games, and I found him thoroughly unlikable, but by the end of the book I was almost rooting for him because I was just so bored with Sam and his dumb cheeseball eating contests.

Also, the narrator, for the life of him, could not pronounce SEGA correctly.

I guess, maybe only read this if you're a GTA superfan? Although, there seem to be plenty of those giving this book not great reviews too, so...

Mr. Fusion says

I happened on this book by accident, on a stroll through the library aisles. I've been a fan of Rockstar Games'

work for over decade, between the *Grand Theft Auto* series and *Red Dead Redemption*. And I still can't believe someone actually wrote a book about them.

But here it is, and man is it a page-turner.

Kushner makes the story not just about the games, but takes it all the way back to the beginnings of its captain-on-the-bridge, Sam Houser. He charts the company's course from its fledgling start in New York City, its meteoric rise, and the pitfalls along the way. Kushner even goes so far as to (almost) humanize the cartoonish Jack Thompson, the right-wing moral crusader who waged war with the video game industry (and Rockstar, in particular). The biggest surprise in the book was the extensive coverage of the "Hot Coffee" scandal. I'd known something of said brouhaha, and that it was bad for the company, but just *how* bad was a bit of a shock.

I think that's what really grabbed me about this book: that it wasn't just a fluff piece written by a fan, but something that puts everything - good and bad - under examination.

What was also a thoroughly elating surprise is how much was devoted to the making of *Grand Theft Auto: Vice City*. Sure it was notable in the company's history, but I didn't expect Kushner to go into so much detail: Burt Reynolds being a dick to work with; sending 30 Scots onto Miami Beach with cameras for research; the reason the game's '80s setting was tackled to begin with. I admit personal bias here that this is my all-time favorite game, but it was still scintillating reading.

Fascinating book.
