



Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture

By David Kushner

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Masters of Doom is the amazing true story of the Lennon and McCartney of video games: John Carmack and John Romero. Together, they ruled big business. They transformed popular culture. And they provoked a national controversy. More than anything, they lived a unique and rollicking American Dream, escaping the broken homes of their youth to produce the most notoriously successful game franchises in history—*Doom* and *Quake*—until the games they made tore them apart. This is a story of friendship and betrayal, commerce and artistry—a powerful and compassionate account of what it's like to be young, driven, and wildly creative.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Doom, the video game in which you navigate a dungeon in the first person and messily lay waste to everything that crosses your path, represented a milestone in many areas. It was a technical landmark, in that its graphics engine delivered brilliant performance on ordinary PC hardware. It was a social phenomenon, with individuals and companies hooking up networks specifically for Doom tournaments and staying up for days to blast away on them (well before the Internet went big-time). The game's publisher, id Software, used an unusual shareware marketing strategy (give away the first levels, charge for the more advanced ones) that worked very well. On top of it all, the gore-filled game raised serious questions about decency in products meant for use by school-age kids. *Masters of Doom* explores the Doom phenomenon, as well as the lives and personalities of the two men behind it: John Carmack and John Romero.

This book manages, for the most part, to keep clear of the breathless techno-hagiography style that characterizes many books with similar subjects. He tells the story of Carmack, Romero, and id--which includes far more than Doom and its successors--in novel style, and he's done a good job of keeping the action flowing and the characters' motivations clear. Some of the quoted passages of dialog sound like idealized reconstructions that probably never came from the lips of real people, but this is an entertaining and informative book, of interest to anyone who's let rip with a nail gun. --*David Wall*

Topics covered: The biographies of John Carmack and John Romero, and of their company, id Software. The development and marketing of all major id games (including Wolfenstein, Doom, Doom II, and Quake) get lavish attention.

From Publishers Weekly

Long before Grand Theft Auto swept the video gaming world, whiz kids John Romero and John Carmack were shaking things up with their influential-and sometimes controversial-video game creations. The two post-adolescents meet at a small Louisiana tech company in the mid-1980s and begin honing their gaming skills. Carmack is the obsessive and antisocial genius with the programming chops; Romero the goofy and idea-inspired gamer. They and their company, id, innovate both technologically and financially, finding ways to give a PC game "side-scrolling," which allows players to feel like action is happening beyond the screen, and deciding to release games as shareware, giving some levels away gratis and enticing gamers to pay for the rest. All-nighters filled with pizza, slavish work and scatological humor eventually add up to a cultural sea change, where the games obsess the players almost as much as they obsess their creators. Fortunately, journalist Kushner glosses over Carmack and Romero's fame, preferring to describe the particulars of video game creation. There are the high-tech improvements-e.g., "diminished lighting" and "texture-mapping"-and pop cultural challenges, as when the two create an update of the Nazi-themed shooter Castle Wolfenstein. The author gives his subjects much leeway on the violence question, and his thoroughness results in some superfluous details. But if the narration is sometimes dry, the story rarely is; readers can almost feel Carmack and Romero's thrill as they create, particularly when they're working on their magnum opus, Doom. After finishing the book, readers may come away feeling like they've just played a round of Doom themselves, as, squinting and light-headed, they attempt to re-enter the world.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-John Romero and John Carmack started programming games as teens. After they met,

they became the first to make a video game on the PC that scrolled smoothly. In their 20s, they went on to create the hugely popular and controversial video games Doom, Wolfenstein 3-D, and Quake. But the passions that drove them to stay up late night after night, living on pizza and Cokes, drove them apart, causing Romero to leave to form his own company. The book traces their successes and failures, giving some insight into what it means to be a video-game designer, and is liberally sprinkled with humor, much of it from the twisted minds of the programmer/gamers themselves. Readers may not find the individuals likable, but they will be fascinated by watching what happens to them. While much of the story takes place in the '90s, the book continues on into the 21st century, where Carmack's Quake 3 is still heavily played and Romero's Daikatana has become one of the most hyped failures in video-game history. The company the young men founded, id Software, continues to be a force in gaming. Both video-game players and budding venture capitalists will find something entertaining and educational here.

Paul Brink, Fairfax County Public Library, VA
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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Agnes Higa:

Spent a free time to be fun activity to do! A lot of people spent their down time with their family, or their friends. Usually they doing activity like watching television, going to beach, or picnic from the park. They actually doing same task every week. Do you feel it? Do you want to something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Could be reading a book may be option to fill your free of charge time/ holiday. The first thing that you will ask may be what kinds of guide that you should read. If you want to attempt look for book, may be the guide untitled Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture can be very good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

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