

"Game On" takes a unique angle at presenting the history of computer and video games. This is well-worn territory so the unique approach is appreciated. Rather than just hundreds of pages of details, author Dustin Hansen instead breaks down video game history into a couple dozen chapters dedicated to specific groundbreaking games. It's an approach that works well but with significant flaws and drawbacks...

Starting with Pong, continuing through Space Invaders, into Zork and then later titles like Halo & Minecraft, Hansen leads us through the nearly 50-year history of the video game industry. His style is light and enthusiastic - more on this later. With each game, he explains the game, tells its history and then specifically identifies why that game is unique and worthy of inclusion. I don't agree with all of his selections - I could do without Portal and Little Big Planet, for instance - but Hansen makes a good case for each.

So why only 2 stars? Well, the book is held back by a number of flaws:

- 1) List-o-mania - In an effort clearly designed to fill pages and pad the book, Hansen gives us "top 10 lists" of various things, like villains or whatever. There's also a small section on becoming a video game developer, etc. These end being mostly just a waste of space.
- 2) Some of the titles and genres overlooked are a little baffling. No real-time strategy games at all?
- 3) Errors! Hansen has the Sega Genesis launching AFTER the Super Nintendo, with Sonic the Hedgehog used to try and overcome the lead that the SNES had already built in the US. Except...none of that is correct. The Genesis launched two full years before the SNES, with Altered Beast as its pack-in title. In the chapter dedicated to Little Big Planet, Hansen refers to the main character as "Sackbot". Not a type - literally every single reference is wrong. As any fan knows, this is incorrect. The main character is "Sackboy" - "Sackbot" being a completely different character that didn't get introduced until the second game. He also refers to Gran Turismo 7 as being already released and gives details about it. Except there is no Gran Turismo 7 - it's now called "Gran Turismo Sport" and still hasn't been released. There are many other errors scattered throughout the book - just enough to make you question everything Hansen writes.
- 4) The writing! While Hansen's writing style is light and breezy, he also writes to a very low level. He also has an annoying habit of reciting a factoid and then breathlessly giving us a comparison immediately after. Ex: "Angry Birds has been downloaded over two billion times. That's more than the populations of Europe, Oceania and North America combined!" Once or twice, no big deal. Dozens of times becomes grating and annoying.

In the end, "Game On" is decent enough but the history of video games has been done better, and more thoroughly, by other books, most notably "The Ultimate History of Video Games" and "Replay: The History of Video Games". The only thing "Game On" has over those two is that it's newer.

Reference

[Dorland's Illustrated Medical Dictionary \(Dorland's Medical Dictionary\)](#)

[Let's Talk About Down There: An OB-GYN Answers All Your Burning Questionsâ€|without Making You Feel Embarrassed for Asking](#)