# Power-Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life

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**Power-Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life** Chris Kohler
BradyGames' *Power-Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life*, by Chris Kohler, is a unique book that gives readers an entertaining and authoritative look at the indelible influence the video gaming, particularly, Japanese gaming, has had on the world.*Power-Up* is the first English-language work of its kind to examine the reasons behind the success of Japanese video games, rather than focusing on the history of video games. Just some of the features readers will find in this book include:Profiles of some of the most fascinating Japanese video game designers in the industry, along with a critical look at Japanese video games from their earliest beginnings to new, exciting trends that ride the bleeding edge of popular culture.Explanations on why Japanese video games are unique and why they resonate so well with young American players.Fresh insight into classic Japanese video games and the elements that made them so different from American games, the origin of Nintendo, Japan's oldest and largest video game producer, Japanese Role-Playing Games, and much more!In addition, the future of the Japanese gaming industry is also explored.

This product is available for sale worldwide.

## Power-Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life Details

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# From Reader Review Power-Up: How Japanese Video Games Gave the World an Extra Life for online ebook

## Jonah says

Power Up is a fun read. It gives a lot of background into why the visual story telling style from Japan really helped re-ignite video games in America.

It is a little slow in the middle when talking about soundtracks, particularly the section on the Final Fantasy Soundtrack Discography. However, this was the only part of the book where it wasn't a fascinating and enjoyable read to me.

Kohler is an obvious enthusiast who anyone that grew up in the states during the 80's will be able to relate to.

This book is an easy recommendation to any gamer. It's just a shame it is out of print.

## Flyss Williams says

Fascinating account of the rise of video games in Japan from the famicom to the game cube and back, charting the rise of phenomenon such as Pokémon, Mario and Final Fantasy.

## Mjhancock says

Kohler investigates the influence that the Japanese industry has had on the video game. He covers most of the expected areas: the beginning rise with arcade games, Miyamoto and the creation of Mario, the JRPG, music games, and Pokemon. On a basic level, I enjoyed the book, and it provided a lot of interesting trivia facts--for example, Kohler recounts how Space Invaders was so popular in Japan that the government had to quadruple production on the 100 yen coin. But I think there were some definite gaps; I would have liked, for instance, a chapter on Capcom and the fighting game genre. More importantly, Kohler's main thesis is that today's games are cinematically oriented, and that the focus on these production values and story-based narratives comes primarily from Japan. I disagree with this, as he seems to be ignoring the text-based origins of the PC game. But other than that, it's a very good book, and it covers its subject material well.

## Josh says

Kohler's thesis is solid and most fruitful early in the book when he analyzes early Japanese games as introducing narrative and other gameplay facets to the nascent medium. Later chapters, though, seem off-topic: as interesting as the Akihabara chapter is, it feels unnecessary. No matter how far off field Kohler gets, though, he manages to spice up those chapters with deft references to previous game creators or topics he examined. And throughout, Kohler masterfully balances his passion for the subject with a honed critical eye (which I've come to appreciate from his writing and podcasts).

## Joe says

This book reignited my love for video games, and in doing so, reignited a new way to enjoy life. The respect you will have for video games as a form of art and storytelling after reading this is just incredible.

## Sanalith says

All I really have to say about this is that I love the fact I had to read it for work. It reminded me of the time I was assigned to read Pride & Prejudice for a college history class. It's just awesome when something you're really interested in becomes required reading.

## Diana Thomsen says

This was not at all what I expected, but it was fascinating nonetheless. I enjoyed reading the history of video gaming, especially that of Nintendo, and the author made some interesting observations that made me really think about how different my life might have been if Japanese video games had never exploded the way they did. I'm pretty sure our lives would have been much poorer for the loss.

## Krzysztof Mathews says

This is an excellent book.

The first thing that will strike the reader is the fact that this is VERY well researched. I would argue that this is one of those books that for folks in media studies or other academic fields is a noteworthy resource. The writer does a solid job of putting together a clear and coherent timeline without hyperbole or exaggeration. Lest one think this faint praise, it is not. Having read a fair number of books that are billed as histories of various figures in the gaming community (video games and tabletop), I've seen too many books where the author has taken on the role of somehow interpreting the major players' innermost thoughts or even conjectured dialogue without supporting material.

By this, I mean that rather than writing:

"According to John Jones, Glen was livid: 'You are trying to destroy my (expletive deleted, adjective) company you (expletive deleted, plural) " he shouted in front of several employees before kicking over a table full of prototypes. Glen would later claim that this argument never happened."

A number of writers instead will simply write "Glen was devastated. All of his work, destroyed by a cabal of people he had considered friends. "How can you do this?" he cried, heartbroken.."

While the latter passage may capture the emotional feeling of the battle, at least from the perspective of a sympathetic view of Glen, what is lost is the sense of historical accountability. This is why a book written

from a clearer perspective like this one is so refreshing.

I am pleased that this book is much more comprehensive in detailing the timeline of video game development without the jarring jumps I have seen in other books. In some cases, I've see histories of video games (and tabletop games ) dwell with an almost fetishistic focus on the early seventies and eighties, only to pick up speed until they reach the mid 2000s out of breath, having neglected most of the mid- late 90s with only a few touchstones. This account thankfully gives a much better balanced retrospective.

This book does an excellent job of distinguishing the crucial role of design process in the Japanese culture. Some of the most interesting passages have to do with the way in which many of the Japanese engineers and designers would embrace the limitations of the media, and then use the tools with sensitivity to their capability, rather than beginning with unreasonably ambitious goals and then having to compress them to the hardware. Considerable discussion is given to how both visual and musical elements are built from the ground up to work within the framework, rather than being brutally stripped down to accommodate technical limitations. I was particularly struck by an account of one designer considering how a game might be framed around a single action verb.

There are a few sections that do not flow as smoothly. A chapter having to do with the music of video games becomes a very lengthy discography that I suspect is best suited to the more devoted Otaku, and begins to read like a Wikipedia article. A chapter having to do with the locales for purchase and sales of used video games has the feeling of a magazine article that was somehow incorporated. That said, these are very minor criticisms, and do not impinge on what is an otherwise very substantial book.

Overall, I believe that this is a very substantial and well researched volume, and will find a welcome in the hands of anyone who is sincerely interested in understanding the role of how Japanese culture has been a crucial part of video game history.

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**Shanna says**

When I first started reading this book, I could not believe that this man had actually written his thesis on video games. But the further I got into the book, I realized how much research had actually gone into each chapter. The chapter on RPG's alone had enough information to be expanded into an entirely new book.

However, the chapter on where to find games in Akihabara seemed to be more like a chapter out of a travel journal.

Even more dissapointing was the chapter on video games translation/localization. This is the chapter I was looking forward to most, but proved to be the most dissapointing. I was hoping this chapter would have had a little more substance to it.

Overall, this is a highly entertaining book on Japanese games coming to America and going from niche market to worldwide phenomenon.

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**Joshua says**

Fantastic for anyone who cares about video games,
as in, really cares about them as an art form with cultural significance.
Maybe it would be interesting if you don't care about video games, but I imagine this is a prerequisite.

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## Sotolf Flasskjegg says

The book was really well written, which helped a lot through the more draggy parts, all in all I really enjoyed it :)

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## Wesley Rea says

I remember ordering this book from Barnes n' Noble nearly ten years ago. This was during my especially formative gaming years, so getting the chance to read this book really helped set me on the path of studying different cultures as well as cultivate my enjoyment of video games. I think I've read it about four times through, and since it will be getting re-released in the next few months, I would highly recommend it for anybody who is interested in learning more about how video games were developed in Japan during the 80s and 90s.

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## Adam says

Even though this book read like the author's master's thesis (because in part, *it is*), his enthusiasm for the subject has a way of overpowering the countless citations.

If you have ever wondered how the video game industry came to be and where it is going, this is book is the best place to start.

It also made me want to hop on a plane to Japan and blow my life's savings on used video games.

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## terpkristin says

What started as Kohler's thesis, expanded into book form. I found his perspective on Japan and their influence on gaming interesting - and one that I could relate to. I'm not sure I learned much of anything, as many of the individual facts I'd read previously (more in gaming history books). Still, I really enjoyed reading and learning more about Japanese culture, and how it relates to the games I've been playing since I was a kid.

## Brian says

> "A delayed game is eventually good, but a rushed game is forever bad."
> -Shigeru Miyamoto

I grew up with the NES, but for roughly twenty years I didn't care about console gaming. My parents refused to buy me an SNES because it wasn't backwards compatable with the NES we already owned, and after that I moved on to DOS games and became a computer gamer. My sister would keep up with consoles, buying a Nintendo 64, a GameCube, and a PlayStation II, and my wife and I received a Wii for our wedding, but until the last year, I didn't keep up with console news at all.

The announcement of the NX, now the Switch, piqued my interest again. And now I sit here with a preorder of Breath of the Wild Master Edition and a copy of this book, which I heard about while listening to an episode of Nintendo Voice Chat. And I thought, even if it was published in 2004, it'd be a great historical piece. And there were some updates for 2016!

*Power Up* is kind of a grab-bag, with different chapters focusing on entirely different subjects. There's a chapter about the changeover of Nintendo from a card-making company to one that produced electronic toys to the company that created the Famicom and obliterated the Crash of 83. There's a chapter about Final Fantasy, finally indicating that it's not called that because it would have been *Square*'s last game, but because it would have been Sakaguchi's. There's a chapter on video game music and the sheer variety of soundtracks, arrangement albums, orchestrated albums, and other media that gets put out in Japan, which would have made me much more jealous had I read this back in 2004 rather than in 2016 when most of those albums are available digitally and it's possible to buy the Secret of Mana or Chrono Trigger soundtracks on iTunes. There's a chapter on Akihabara and the game stores therein. There's a chapter on Pokemon, of course.

The chapter that stood out the most to me was the chapter on translation. As someone who speaks Japanese, albeit pretty badly, and has been playing games in Japanese for additional practice, translation is a major interest of mine, and I'm always interested to read more about the process of turning a game from one language to another. It's easy for me to look at a line in English, check the Japanese, and complain, but I don't have to worry about the cultural knowledge of the audience, space on the cartridge or audio limitations, meddling executives, time constraints, or anything else that goes into professional translation. As Ted Woolsey says when talking about Secret of Mana

> I had to translate most games in 30 days, with ongoing re-editing thereafter, so it was hard to get the time I wanted to perfect certain areas. Space was continually a problem, because I had a strong understanding of how rich the Japanese versions were, and yet we were only able to squeeze a quarter of the content into the English versions.

But the chapter isn't just about language translation, either. One of my favorite sections was the part about Tecmo Bowl, whose success is credited to its Japanese designers not being football fans and working from the official rules. Lacking pre-existing biases, they were able to create a truly great game.

I also liked the chapter on Akihabara, and especially the 2016 update. The video game podcasts I listen to lament the passing of the glory days of Akihabara and how finding games there isn't any more likely than anywhere else, now that hordes of collectors have stripped the shelves clean. I took a trip with my wife and

some friends there last year, and I described it as as the center of "Chinese tourists buying electronics." We went to Super Potato, and for someone from America it was indeed a glorious paradise. But we didn't see any huge deals, and the only things we bought were stuffed animals. The little stores were selling electronics or anime goods, not games.

The block of ice and air conditioner were still there, though.

The updated edition also has a chapter on Satoru Iwata, the fourth president of Nintendo. I remember seeing the outpouring of grief when he died and wondering who he was--see above about not paying attention to console news--and then finding out that he was behind the Kirby games as well as the DS and Wii. The man who fit the Kanto region into Pokemon Gold and Silver. The man who, when he was General Manager of HAL, came in to do some programming to get Super Smash Brothers Melee finished on time. The man who started Nintendo Direct. In a world of out-of-touch managers who almost seem to disdain the work that the people they manage actually do, Iwata was a rare gem. As his perhaps most famous quote goes:

> On my business card, I am a corporate president. In my mind, I am a game developer. But in my heart, I am a gamer.

That's a boss I think we all would like to have.

*Power Up* ends up feeling a little disconnected due to the changing chapter topics, and the main thrust of the argument--that Japanese games adopted cinematic tropes and changed the way video games were made--I'm not sure I entirely agree with, probably because of my aforementioned DOS gamer background. But I enjoyed every moment of the book, and I'm glad my renewed interest in Nintendo led me to it.