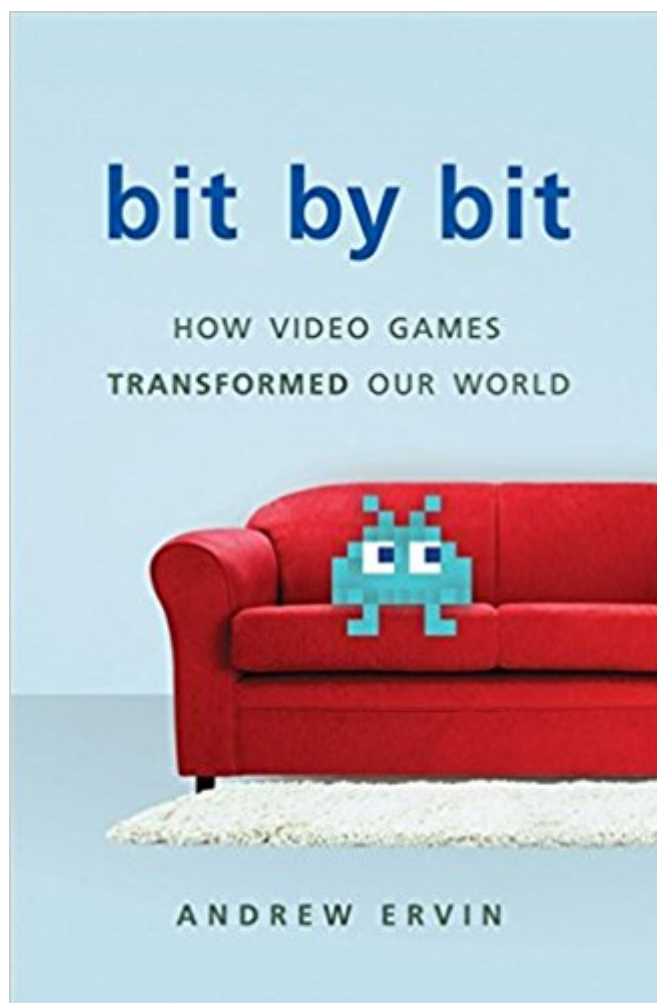The book was found

Bit By Bit: How Video Games Transformed Our World

Synopsis

An acclaimed critic argues that video games are the most vital art form of our timeVideo games have seemingly taken over our lives. Whereas gamers once constituted a small and largely male subculture, today 67 percent of American households play video games. The average gamer is now thirty-four years old and spends eight hours each week playing--and there is a 40 percent chance this person is a woman.In Bit by Bit, Andrew Ervin sets out to understand the explosive popularity of video games. He travels to government laboratories, junk shops, and arcades. He interviews scientists and game designers, both old and young. In charting the material and technological history of video games, from the 1950s to the present, he suggests that their appeal starts and ends with the sense of creativity they instill in gamers. As Ervin argues, games are art because they are beautiful, moving, and even political--and because they turn players into artists themselves.

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Customer Reviews

PRAISE FOR BIT BY BIT"Ervin brings a literary sensibility to his study... [he] makes an affable guide through the history of the medium... For me, the book's key statement is this: 'Today, if there is in fact a distinction between mass entertainment and the fine arts, it gets complicated more effectively by video games than any other medium.' Bit by Bit plumbs these complications with welcomed intelligence."--Washington Post "Believe it or not, all those hours playing Super Mario Bros. or Sonic the Hedgehog really meant something. Andrew Ervin takes a brilliant look at the effects of those games--which did not, in fact, rot our brains."--Rolling Stone"Whether sparked by Pong in the 1970s or Minecraft in the 2010s, humanity's love affair with video games is enduring;

US consumers alone spent US$23.5 billion on them in 2015. Andrew Ervin slaloms through their cultural and technological history, from physicist William Higinbotham's 1958 analog simulation Tennis for Two to Atari classics, arcade stalwart Pac-Man and the Warcraft franchise. Ervin even plays the original games, research that involves the installation of vintage computer drives and an 'obscenely loud' Donkey Kong machine. A vivid foray into alternative worlds."--Nature "An urbane, witty, passionate, and eminently literate history of video games from their infancy in the 1950s to today... Ervin, who gives equally satisfying treatment to game sounds, special effects, and music, is a terrific storyteller, and he provides profiles of dozens of game developers and fanatics." --Philadelphia Inquirer "An engrossing and necessary read." --Electric Literature "A brisk, thoughtful tour of video game history. Ervin is an ideal guide... BIT BY BIT might persuade holdouts just how awesome video games are."--Games World of Puzzles "Literary and playful... Bit by Bit provides a fascinating exploration of the world of video games, their history and importance to modern culture."--Winnipeg Free Press"[Bit by Bit] is a contemplative ode to electronic entertainment...It's a personal journey that speaks volumes on how video games have grown, evolved, and multiplied to fill myriad roles over the years."--Publishers Weekly"It's unusual for a history of video games to feature multiple quotes from Rilke, references to philosophy and Zen Buddhism, and comparisons to great works of art. But that's exactly what Ervin serves up to support his compelling argument: video games can be art."--Booklist"A fun and insightful analysis of the cultural, educational, and historical value of video games. Ervin deftly traces the evolution of our most interactive art form from Adventure to Minecraft, while offering riveting first-hand accounts from many of the men and women who made it all happen. Bit by Bit is an essential addition to every video game lover's library."--Ernest Cline, author of Ready Player One and Armada"Bit by Bit is the perfect video game book: it's part gamers' history, part history of games, and by a writer inclined to philosophical insight and literary reference. Extra hearts for a history that actually includes the contributions of women, too!"--Amber Sparks, author of The Unfinished World: And Other Stories and May We Shed These Human Bodies"Not many books about video games allow Denis Johnson to rub shoulders with Monkey Island or Vladimir Nabokov with Peter Molyneux. Ervin's taste in games is excellent, his points are thought-provoking, and his cultural omnivorousness (take note, aspiring game journalists) is thrilling. A terrific book."--Tom Bissell, author of Extra Lives and Apostle"Like spaceships or skyscrapers, video games are a collaboration of humans and machines, of art and commerce. One part flesh, one part metal, one part markets, one part truth. Andrew Ervin composes a winsome but measured portrait of games from all these pieces, bit by bit."--Ian Bogost, author of Play Anything: The Pleasure of Limits, the Uses of Boredom, and the Secret of GamesPRAISE FOR BURNING

DOWN GEORGE ORWELL'S HOUSE:"Burning Down George Orwell's House is a sweet book full of delights. Since many of its best passages are rhapsodies on single malt whiskies, one is tempted to call it a wee bonny dram of a tale." --The New York Times Book Review "As all good comedies do, Ervin's novel contains a sober question at its core-in this case, whether the idea of 'escape' itself is just another manipulation sold to us 'proles' by the very same wired world that engulfs and exhausts us. Take a wild guess what George Orwell would say." --Maureen Corrigan, NPR's Fresh Air"Burning Down George Orwell's House is fiction as high-wire act, and Ray Welter is a nowhere man for the ages, going down and out in the shadow of the man himself. Ervin tosses up hilarity and horror, musicality and menace, with page after page of firecracker prose."--Marlon James, Man Booker-prize winning author of A Brief History of Seven Killings "Burning Down George Orwell's House is really most enjoyable, a witty, original turn on the life and memory of the Sage of Jura, taking place on the island where he wrote Nineteen Eighty-Four. Eric Blair serves as the McGuffin in this story, which is one part black comedy and one part a meditation on modern life. It is well written and truly original"--Robert Stone, author of Dog SoldiersPRAISE FOR EXTRAORDINARY RENDITIONS"The variety of viewpoints and the author's evident intimacy with an ancient foreign capital [Budapest] are promising, and Ervin makes it plain that he is taking on weighty themes." --The New York Times Book Review"Set in a madly grasping modern Budapest, literary critic Ervin's debut mines very different ways of achieving personal and artistic freedom in three neatly polished, interlocking tales. . . . With dexterous sensibility and fluid prose, Ervin's protagonists find liberation from the onerous strictures of Budapest's Nazi and Communist past." --Publishers Weekly (starred review), Best Books of 2010

Andrew Ervin is the author of Extraordinary Renditions and Burning Down George Orwell's House. He has written essays and reviews for the New York Times Book Review, Chicago Tribune, San Francisco Chronicle, and others. He teaches part time at Temple University and lives with his wife in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.

The amount of research put into this work is just amazing, I can't even begin to imagine the work involved. It really paid off! This is a great read and I think fans of video games could all gain some knowledge from it. It was very engaging and definitely didn't feel like reading nonfiction!

As someone whose last new system was a Sega Dreamcast and after that a used Playstation 1, I wouldn't call myself a gamer. I found this book enjoyable and informative. Ervin's book sheds light

on the history of video games (of which I knew virtually nothing) in an engaging and easy manner. There's plenty of academia in here as far as the nuance of creating a well-researched argument, but it does not come across as stuffy. Here we have a book that is full of joy, written by a person who sees the wonder and cultural currency that gaming and video games can have. Ervin is a storyteller, and that voice carries through the historical parts of the book.While a reader who is super enmeshed in the gaming culture would rip through this book in a sitting or two, I don't think anything is lost if one were to casually make their way through the book over the course of days or weeks, to enjoy the book, bit by bit. Bottom line: if you're a fan of gaming, this book is worthy of your time.

An incredibly wonderful trip through Video Game history and it's affect on our culture and world, handled deftly by Andrew Ervin. The author gives us a beautiful history, giving us insights to how video gaming changed, and continues to change our world. The introductions to those pioneer women and men who built the foundations of this unique art form, was eye opening and gives so much information into the how's, what's and where's. A great read and one that I was so happy to pass to the young gamers in my own house to read.

This book hits the sweet spot between entertainment and insight. Ervin is the perfect, enthusiastic guide for this inventive history of video games. Funny, nostalgic, and frequently surprising in the connections made between video games and art, I recommend this for gamers, artists, and the casual nostalgist for 70s, 80s, and 90s pop culture.

As a bookish Gen X/Millennial cusper, I would venture IÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢m precisely the target audience for Bit by Bit by Andrew Ervin, a book that is by turns a critical history of video games as an emergent popular entertainment medium and a memoir of the authorÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s lifelong relationship with playing video games, which maps well onto the mediumÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s forty-plus year history. In the book, Ervin makes a good case for why people interested in immersive or communal aesthetic experiences more and more often look to games as cultural touchstones, replacing, to an extent, movies and novels. He pairs interviews with auteur video game developers like Warren Robinett, Tim Schafer, and Erin Robinson with key excerpts from cultural theorists like Donna Haraway, Theodor Adorno, and Anita Sarkeesian to make his case and handle the bookÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s exploration of the medium.While reading Bit by Bit, I have been simultaneously taking in episodes of Retrowaretv.comÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s The Video Game Years web series, which, as one would expect, covers the early history of arcade and console video

gaming, starting in 1977ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â•the year the Atari 2600 launched in the US. The Video Game Years, as a series of videos, is, of course, intensely visual and highly produced with interviews, gameplay footage, and flashy graphics, and it stands in stark contrast to Bit by Bit, which has nary a screenshot from a game. To his credit, Ervin does an excellent job with descriptions of the look and feel of the games he focuses on, from the infamous duck dragons in Adventure to the blocky graphics of Minecraft. Ervin is clearly appealing to an audience of book-first folks whoÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â•instead of separating wheat from chaff in the seemingly endless flow of gamer gossip, longplays, live streams, and speed runs that are on YouTube and TwitchÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â•want an overview of the questions that have come to shape video games as the dominant form of popular entertainment in the twenty-first century, including everything from video gamesÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢ turn toward becoming dominated by first-person shooter series that are what Anthony Swofford might call brutal ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"war pornÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• in service to the US military-industrial complex to gamingÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s historical and continually enforced lack of diversity and gender equality (Gamergate) to the old chestnut, can video games be art (Roger EbertÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s hasty, anti-gaming blog post, etc.)?Perhaps the most compelling part of reading Bit by Bit is ErvinÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s memoir of his own experiences with video games. Since he is a writer first and a video gamer second, it is interesting to read how he values and analyzes game creation in relation to his own practice of writing fiction, as well as how he describes the experience a well-made game can afford the imagination of the player. I must admit, I die a little each time I read a user review of a video game affectionately describe it as ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Å"a nice little time-waster.ÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã Â• It is clear that Ervin understands that video games have transcended the perception that they are childrenÃƒÂ¢Ã â¬Ã â„¢s toys designed for killing time, and he is able to relate the importance of and potential for video games as an aesthetic experience that can profoundly affect the wide-ranging community of players, which is why Bit by Bit is worth a read.

Really enjoyed Bit by Bit.As someone who grew up on videogames it really spoke to me. The weaving of history and art in relation to the creation of videogames fascinate my brain. The personal narrative Ervin puts in every now and then gives us a real world view of videogames.The language in the book is very accessible and invites readers in. I also liked the literary references throughout. I think what I felt most about the book was the faith in videogames as a piece of evolving art. That they will keep going on an growing as long as we do.This is a smaller an subtle thing the book does that is pulled off seamlessly--soulful meditation on what videogames mean to the players

themselves. How do we see ourselves when we play these games? Is it pure fantasy? Is it an escape? Those questions linger throughout the book and again that's what I enjoyed about it. There aren't many books that build an interesting narrative about videogames so I was glad to see someone finally do that.It's an exciting read.It also does not participate in the erasure of women designers from videogame history like most traditional histories. Maybe what I like most about the Bit by Bit was the unique approach it took to telling its tale. It recreates the feeling of history without losing the facts.So, I just enjoyed it and so you will, too. Trust me.Now go use your master sword and get this book at the library or local bookstore.

I love all of Andrew Ervin's writing. This well researched book tops my list. So well researched and gives the reader alot of good energy. Buy it!

BIT BY BIT grows on you, bit by bit. Fascinating and informative social history of gaming; made me yearn for those wasted hours playing video games, and also made me realize perhaps they weren't wasted at all.

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