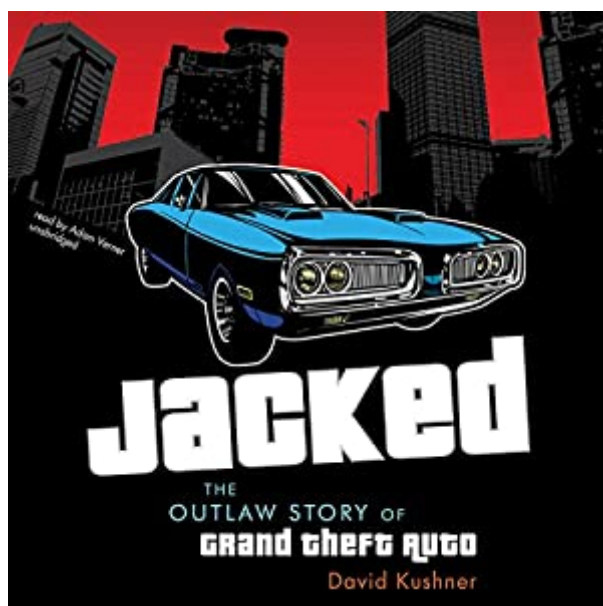


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# Jacked: The Outlaw Story Of Grand Theft Auto



## Synopsis

Inside the making of the multibillion-dollar Grand Theft Auto videogame empire.... 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. Written by David Kushner, author of *Masters of Doom* and a top journalist on gaming, this book is drawn from over 10 years of interviews and research, including first-hand knowledge of Grand Theft Auto's creators and detractors. It 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. It also offers inside details on key episodes in the development of the series, including the financial turmoil of Rockstar games, the infamous "Hot Coffee" sex minigame 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 hear *Jacked* and get the real story behind this boundary-pushing game. David Kushner is an award-winning journalist and author. A contributing editor of *Rolling Stone*, he has also written for *Wired*, *The New York Times Magazine*, *New York*, and *GQ*. He served as the digital-culture commentator for National Public Radio and is an adjunct professor of journalism at New York University.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Good book; heavy on facts, a lot of quotes from actual Rockstar/DMA employees. Content is well-organized, and while it does mostly center on the Houser brothers, there's quite a bit on R\* and DMA in general. The only issue that I have with this book is the editing. There are sentences that make no sense, and there is an unusually high number of typos. Sometimes the context is enough to understand what the author means - sometimes not. But if there is one thing that is absolutely infuriating it's the misspelling of "pixelated". Kushner is absolutely hellbent on using this word (as many as three times in one chapter), and each time he spells it as "pixilated" - which, while an actual word, means something completely unrelated. And while this may seem like a petty thing to bring up, the frequency of this is what makes it.. annoying. Overall though, great book, definitely worth a read.

If David Kushner's other book (Masters of Doom: How Two Guys Created an Empire and Transformed Pop Culture) is about success and business souring a friendship, then "Jacked: The Outlaw Story of Grand Theft Auto" is about the cold business world destroying wild dreams and ambitions. Sam Houser is a man who came to America with such wild dreams. The president and co-founder of Rockstar Games wanted to create video games that reminded him of the movies he enjoyed in his youth. Not only that, he wanted to make games immersive and sophisticated - an art form that older generations could no longer stereotype as 'children's toys.' But after the multimillion dollar success of the Playstation 2's "Grand Theft Auto" trilogy, Sam and his rebel crew at Rockstar found themselves caught in the crosshairs of an American culture war fueled by puritanical politicians and parents. Pressure only worsened as Rockstar's parent company, Take-Two Interactive, was struck by fraud investigations. Suddenly, making envelope-pushing video games was no longer a dream job... collided with cold reality, it was hell on earth. The Hot Coffee scandal in particular really drove the boys to the brink. "Jacked" does a good job of showing the immense amounts of tension and soul-crushing strife in the aftermath that forced many to leave the company and others to view their stressful work environment as a place that wasn't quite so fun anymore. Meanwhile, behind enemy lines and spearheading the attack on Rockstar (or at least trying to make a name for himself as a crusader for justice) was an embittered Miami lawyer. Having already had moderate success against Two-Live Crew and Howard Stern, Jack Thompson trained

his litigating guns on a new scourge that was not only threatening the youth of America in his eyes, but putting his young son in danger on a daily basis: violent video games. And Rockstar made just the type of product that got Thompson's infamous press releases rolling. "Jacked" fascinated me. I followed the entire controversy and free-for-all between Thompson, politicians and Rockstar Games during my college years, and this book recounts those warring days in perfect detail. I remember the blowup over "Kill All the Haitians," Hot Coffee, the numerous proposed bills, and Thompson's persistent trolling of GamePolitics.com. I was there for it all - and "Jacked" was a wonderful trip back in time as well as a fulfilling journey behind the scenes. Speaking of Jack Thompson, the book's portrayal of him is surprisingly sympathetic. For gamers, he has come to represent a kind of mustache-twirling supervillain, a destroyer of fun wherever it may be. In stark contrast, the man presented here is a concerned father who only wants to make the world a safer, cleaner place for his son. Of course, if one were to dig up Thompson's lengthy, rambling, bile-filled press releases (which "Jacked" doesn't quite reproduce) they might see a different side of the disbarred lawyer... perhaps a man driven mad by a crusade that has consumed him. Each chapter is headed by an illustration or quote that makes the story feel like it's straight out of a "Grand Theft Auto" playthrough. As Rockstar gets in larger amounts of trouble, the chapters are illustrated with increasing 'Wanted Level' stars. I loved this little element - it made the book even more of a fun ride. Perhaps the book could have gone into more detail about some things. For example, Kushner left out any mention of Volition Inc. and how Sam Houser might have felt about the GTA clone "Saints Row" series - especially "Saints Row 2," which some gamers jumped onto as a response to GTA IV's focus on heavy realism and man-dates. The Sam in "Jacked" doesn't strike me as the type of person who would be too happy about that. All in all, this was not only a great book, but a captivating page turner. I was sad to see it end so quickly. Like "Masters of Doom," "Jacked" has all the right elements for a fantastic movie: drama, humor and heartbreak. If you're like me and you've spent hundreds of hours between "GTAI," "Vice City" and "San Andreas," you'd be doing yourself a huge favor by reading this book.

This book was so good that I bought the author's other video game related book masters of doom and I'm gone to read it right after this review. As a life long gamer and as a fan and GTA player had to read it as I said I'm a life long gamer but right about now I'm at the stage where I want to know what's going on behind the scenes and how video games are made and the people who make them and their motivation and is not my first video game book about the subject I guess I'm trying to get inside game developer's mind because one hopefully I can make my own game's one day. That

could only be half as good as the game and the author (David Kushner) and other video game book author have written about it's a great book and if your a life long fan of games like I am pick it up

I could follow the two main characters well enough. But there were a lot of other people covered, and I had trouble keeping them all straight. I did love the small chapters. Let me finish a chapter very often and move on to subsequent ideas. Did not really know a lot about the GTA game before reading this. Was pretty educational too.

As an avid fan of Rockstar this book was a little disappointing. Overall it was well written and informative, but I suppose you can't hope for a happy ending in non fiction. I expected a good deal of bias. I figured Sam Houser would be portrayed as likeable, while Jack Thompson would be slandered. However, I felt sympathetic towards both men at the start of the book and sort of hated them both by the end. Additionally, Rockstar's actions throughout the GTA controversies and the working conditions, apparently for all of their games, left me feeling a bit guilty for supporting the company. Overall, I enjoyed the book a great deal, finishing it within a day, but it left a bitter taste in my mouth, despite the fact that Kushner tried to show how they had "grown up" with GTA IV.

If you want to make a video game or learn what it takes this is the book to get you started.

The book does a very good job of showing the inner workings of Rockstar while it was building up its hit series GTA. There are times I felt it was a little jumbled, mostly with the Jack Thompson stuff, but it does not effect the quality of the book. I recommend reading this on a vacation like I did.

Starting from the humble beginnings of the 2D top down original game to Grand Theft Auto IV, this book chronicles the hardships, the luck and the controversies that went into making these series of violent yet innovative bar-pushing games. A great read that even manages to humanize Jack Thompson, once the enemy of gamers everywhere.

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