



Accidental Empires: How the Boys of Silicon Valley Make Their Millions, Battle Foreign Competition, and Still Can't Get a Date

By Robert X. Cringely

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Computer manufacturing is--after cars, energy production and illegal drugs--the largest industry in the world, and it's one of the last great success stories in American business. *Accidental Empires* is the trenchant, vastly readable history of that industry, focusing as much on the astoundingly odd personalities at its core--Steve Jobs, Bill Gates, Mitch Kapor, etc. and the hacker culture they spawned as it does on the remarkable technology they created. Cringely reveals the manias and foibles of these men (they are always men) with deadpan hilarity and cogently demonstrates how their neuroses have shaped the computer business. But Cringely gives us much more than high-tech voyeurism and insider gossip. From the birth of the transistor to the mid-life crisis of the computer industry, he spins a sweeping, uniquely American saga of creativity and ego that is at once uproarious, shocking and inspiring.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Robert X. Cringely manages to capture the contradictions and everyday insanity of computer industry empire building, while at the same time chipping away sardonically at the PR campaigns that have built up some very common businesspeople into the household gods of geekdom. Despite some chuckles at the expense of all things nerdy, white, and male in the computer industry, Cringely somehow manages to balance the humor with a genuine appreciation of both the technical and strategic accomplishments of these industry luminaries. Whether you're a hard-boiled Silicon Valley marketing exec fishing for an IPO or just a plain old reader with an interest in business history and anecdotal storytelling, there's something to enjoy here.

From Publishers Weekly

Rich in relevant, entertaining digressions, this breezy but informative history recounts how gifted, maverick "nerds," "hippies" and entrepreneurs like Apple's Steve Wozniak and Steve Jobs invented and developed microprocessors and operating systems into today's volatile, ego-driven, highly competitive personal computer industry, in which ever-changing technical standards propel the market. Info World columnist Cringley charges that the astronomical sales of PCs (\$70-billion worldwide in 1990) "both created the longest continuous peacetime economic expansion in U.S. history and ended it." While current dominance by IBM spurs competitors to further research and networking, the author predicts that by the year 2000 single chips will render today's PCs obsolete and that of American technology only software will survive.

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From Library Journal

Readers of the computer industry journal Info World will recognize Cringely as the weekly columnist who openly solicits industry secrets from readers. Here, he offers an irreverent explanation (he says it's harder to be an explainer than a historian) of the computer culture together with an informative chronology of the major computer companies and the personalities that have shaped the industry. His informal insights presented in a characteristically wry manner will make this a popular book for a wide audience.

- Joseph Barth, U.S. Military Acad. Lib., West Point, N.Y.

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Judith Rayl:

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