



## Renegades of the Empire: How Three Software Warriors Started a Revolution Behind the Walls of Fortress Microsoft

*By Michael Drummond*

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The "Beastie Boys" did whatever it took to make their revolution happen. . . .

St. John's disregard for Microsoft authority figures was equaled only by the game developers' antipathy for the big Redmond company. No one knew how far he might go until his boss put him in charge of a presentation to the trade press.

St. John emerged on stage at the Microsoft theater and told the trade-press writers: "Yep, I know what you guys think about Windows."

He booted up a computer. The blue start-up screen with clouds and Windows 3.1 logo came to life on a large display. A graphic of a shotgun barrel rose from the bottom of the screen. With the audience looking down its sights, the gun blasted five holes in the logo. The press erupted with laughter and approving applause.

Microsoft's senior marketing vice president turned crimson and told St. John's boss, Rick Segal, "You gotta fire this guy."

Segal set the marketing guy straight.

"I looked him right in the face and, said, 'You don't have a clue. They think you're a slime bag and now they think he's a hero.'

"Competing in the high-tech computer market is a lot like war--especially if you work at Microsoft. Bill Gates's gladiators--his engineers and evangelists and programmers--were famous for seizing new terrain, converting nonbelievers, and always winning, no matter what the cost. No one took the lessons of the Microsoft way more to heart than Craig Eisler, Eric Engstrom, and Alex St. John, a trio of evangelists and software engineers who, more than anything, wanted to conquer a market on their own.

Their first attempt was a top-secret effort to make Windows do what it had never done before: play games. Turning their well-honed combat skills on their own

company, the trio--often called the "Beastie Boys"--rammed DirectX, their game project, through, first without permission, then without regard for political correctness, protocol, or budget restraints. The battle spilled from the halls of Microsoft into the international gaming community, but within months, DirectX was being used in every one of the best-selling games for the PC.

The "Beastie Boys" had won the battle, but they received so few rewards that they felt as if they'd lost the war. So they set their sights on the Internet. Their new project: Chrome, a Web browser that could bring television-quality animated graphics to the Internet. It was every Microsoft marketer's dream, every competitor's nightmare. It should have changed the Internet and the lives of millions, none more than those of the three designers.

Michael Drummond gained exclusive access to this trio's story--the tale of a rise, a fall, and, perhaps, a triumph. In telling it, he gives us the most revealing glimpse yet into the world's most successful company. Renegades of the Empire isn't just a story of a nascent technology--it's a primer on how to get rid of your boss, how to bury your expenses on someone else's balance sheet, and when to put on your Viking costume and walk the halls swinging an ax if you want to get things done. It is a story of fascinating science and high-tech boys and their toys, but even more, it is the story of how three engineers turned the might of an empire to their own ends.

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### Editorial Review

#### Amazon.com Review

Microsoft chairman Bill Gates is by no accounts a kind, nurturing type of manager. In conversation, according to *Renegades of the Empire*, Gates is said to challenge and goad people just to see how robustly they'll defend a position. He may not know whether they're right or wrong, but he likes to see how confident they are. In that environment, the meek don't do particularly well. But the three "software warriors" portrayed in *Renegades of the Empire* were over the top, even by Microsoft standards.

Alex St. John, Eric Engstrom, and Craig Eisler started at Microsoft as evangelists, the guys who persuade companies to create products to run on Microsoft operating systems. All three, separately and together, would end up giving the company fits with their cockiness and contrarian ways. Eventually, they would team up on a project called Chrome, a revolutionary technology designed to bring three-dimensional graphics to the Web. While these three bigger-than-life characters are vividly portrayed, this is mostly a story about technology: where the ideas come from, how it's developed, how internal company politics affects its development, and how outside companies are courted and cajoled to participate. Drummond, a skillful writer and dogged journalist, thoroughly explains all the technology--but, in the end, the acronyms take over. This makes for a tough read if you're not technologically inclined. Still, anyone with the slightest tech background should enjoy this peek behind Microsoft's silicon curtain. --*Lou Schuler*

#### From Publishers Weekly

This is the story of a failure in the software industry, a Microsoft project that never went into commercial production. The author, a San Diego Union technology and business writer, profiles the oddball team that orchestrated this effort, three characters who stand out even by the unconventional standards of Microsoft programmers (they were known around the company as the Beastie Boys). Their mission was originally to develop programming code that would run computer games from the Windows operating environment, a major step forward for personal computers. Almost as soon as a workable product was created, however, the team switched its sights to the next frontier, the Internet, and attempted to adapt the concept for Web surfers. This effort ultimately failed, due to conflicts in management objectives and bad timing; the programming produced required computing power that, in the mid-1990s was not yet part of the mainstream PC market. The "attack dog" personalities of the Beastie Boys also played a significant role, too significant for any general lessons to be learned from their failure. Although there is plenty of local color and insider descriptions of the Microsoft environment abound and programmers and gaming enthusiasts may find this saga entertaining, they are unlikely to gain any useful insights from a story that hinges more on the clash of particular egos than the more general mechanics of a working office culture. Author tour. (Dec.)  
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#### From Library Journal

This book, yet another about Microsoft, offers a behind-the-scenes look at the company and at Project Chrome. Drummond, a technology business writer for the San Diego Union and winner of the Society of Professional Journalists Award, describes the background of the three Renegades, or "Beastie Boys," who initiated Chrome and explains how they were recruited by Microsoft. Working together, the three would "create technology that made it possible for computer games to run on Windows 95, a seminal technological feat." However, the Renegades "built their technology without initial approval from their superiors and rammed it through with ruthless determination and indifference to internal political decorum." They then embarked on Chrome, which combined television and the personal computer and had the potential for

changing perception and exploration of the Internet. The rise and ultimate demise of Chrome are vividly explored in this book. The implications of the antitrust case against Microsoft are also examined. A fascinating account of the inner workings of Microsoft, this book is an important addition to the literature on Microsoft and is recommended to public and academic libraries.

*-Lucy T. Heckman, St. John's Univ. Lib., Jamaica, NY*

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## **Users Review**

### **From reader reviews:**

#### **Barbara Spangler:**

Here thing why this particular Renegades of the Empire: How Three Software Warriors Started a Revolution Behind the Walls of Fortress Microsoft are different and reliable to be yours. First of all reading a book is good but it really depends in the content of it which is the content is as delightful as food or not. Renegades of the Empire: How Three Software Warriors Started a Revolution Behind the Walls of Fortress Microsoft giving you information deeper since different ways, you can find any publication out there but there is no guide that similar with Renegades of the Empire: How Three Software Warriors Started a Revolution Behind the Walls of Fortress Microsoft. It gives you thrill reading through journey, its open up your personal eyes about the thing this happened in the world which is probably can be happened around you. It is possible to bring everywhere like in area, café, or even in your method home by train. Should you be having difficulties in bringing the paper book maybe the form of Renegades of the Empire: How Three Software Warriors Started a Revolution Behind the Walls of Fortress Microsoft in e-book can be your alternative.

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#### **Linda Hill:**

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