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THE TRUE STORY OF THE INTERNET

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This is a landmark series that tells the story of the Internet Revolution – the technological, cultural, commercial and social revolution that has radically changed all our lives. It takes an edgy, irreverent approach to its subject in a way that Silicon Valley will relish.

Now we hear how it happened directly from the men and women who made it possible.

From the founders of eBay, Yahoo, Amazon, Netscape, Google and many others, we hear amazing stories of how, in ten short years, the internet took over our lives. These extra-ordinary men and women tell us how they went from being geeky, computer obsessed nerds to being 21st century visionaries in the time it takes most people to get their first promotion - and how they made untold billions along the way.

The style of the story-telling is up close and personal. With first hand testimony from the key players, we tell a story that has all the excitement of a thriller – full of battles and back-stabbing, moments of genius and moments of sheer hilarity. You will never surf the net in the same way again.

The series is presented by technology journalist John Heileman (Wired, New York Magazine). He's an edgy, combative, hi-energy New Yorker who never takes anything at face value. He's the Hunter S Thompson of tech. He's a personal friend of most of Silicon Valley's most important characters and he revels in craziness of it all. After all, this is a story in which 20 year olds become overnight billionaires, create, destroy and re-create more wealth in ten years than the human race has ever seen but they still struggle to get a date.

EPISODICS



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The Battle of the Browsers

This episode tells of the epic battle between America's mightiest corporation and a small group of computer geeks who'd created a revolutionary technology. It's a battle that would involve the US government, create billions of dollars of wealth and change all our lives. Welcome to the Browser Wars.

Our window on the marvels of the web is the browser – the humble software that lets us navigate through cyberspace. For most of us Internet Explorer is all we've ever used – but it wasn't always the only browser on the block.

After Sir Tim Berners Lee invented the Web in 1991 the race began to turn his idea into something that would have universal popular appeal. The excessive text and overcomplicated commands of Sir Tim's original web browser would never catch on with those outside the geek community – the Web was demanding an easy and attractive way to access it. With the biggest companies in the world still ignorant of the possibilities of this new invention it was left to a group of plucky young students from the University of Illinois to create a simple but attractive browser – they named it Mosaic and it was to take the world by storm.

But their meteoritic rise, coupled with a cocky attitude, was to awake the Valley's sleeping giant – Microsoft – and provoke it to react with such swift and brutal force that the US government would eventually have to step in.

Told through the first hand accounts of the teams that created both Netscape and Internet Explorer, John Heleimann shows us how a bunch of kids with a great idea almost unseated the world's largest software company.

EPISODE 2 – Search Wars

In a few short years a new and unique way of finding information revolutionised the Web and in the process created one of the largest companies in the US – Google. But the story of how this happened is riddled with brilliant insight, missed opportunities and a whole new way of thinking about business.

When Larry Page and Sergey Brin, two exceptionally bright Stamford PHD students, turned their hands to the problems of Internet search many did not see the point. Yahoo had apparently cornered the market with their ubiquitous search engine and for most people the problems of search was something they thought they could live with.

But Larry and Sergey, with their super sharp minds, were convinced they had a better way for people to find what they were looking for on the rapidly expanding and messy Internet. Their simple but brilliant idea was to rank pages in relation to how many other people found those pages useful.

When Google exploded onto the scene with their first public release of the software they changed everything. You didn't search anymore – you Googled. But despite their huge success it wasn't until they found an ingenious way of making money from their popularity that they became the multi-Billion dollar corporate behemoth they are today.

Episode 3 – Ebay/Amazon



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Amazon and Ebay – the two titans of modern E-Commerce are each massively successful and each incredibly different. No two companies define the internet like they do. In an astonishing journalistic coup, their founders of the web giants, Jeff Bezos and Pierre Omidyar tell the story of how their business grew from nothing to dominate the global economy and profoundly change the way we live our lives.

Their stories are full of surprises and unexpected twists and turns. Jeff Bezos tells us that when he first came up with the idea of Amazon, no one believed it had a future. Pierre Omidyar tells us the amazing story of how he dreamed up Ebay - today worth \$45 billion - as a hobby.

Through these and other characters, we relive the stratospheric growth of the net, the unbelievable years of the boom and the bust and how suddenly it seemed the whole world went from being clueless about the net to gobbling up shares in any company with dot com in its name, no matter how stupid its business plan. This episode charts one of the greatest speculative bubbles in history through its most dramatic ups and downs.

Episode 4: Power to the People

This is the story of the internet has changed society and how a new breed of entrepreneurs are shaping our digital futures.

It all started with Napster – a way of swapping music that was dreamt up a teenage kid called Shawn Fanning. It was as controversial as it was historic. For some Napster was nothing more than a service that facilitated digital theft. But to others Napster's revolutionary way of sharing data over the Web hailed the popularisation of what the early Net geeks had known all along – the Web is the perfect place for collaboration, community and sharing things.

But Napster's success was ultimately its downfall – its massive popularity brought it squarely into the sights of corporate America who saw people taking music for free and launched huge lawsuits against Napster and its users. Napster, however brief its life, had started something that could not be stopped – computer users were now used to collaborating, communicating and sharing information for free over the Web. The genie had been let out of the bottle and no amount of scorn or moral outrage from big business was going to put it back – either they embraced the revolution or they would be slain by it.

Although Napster had burnt out rapidly the seeds had been planted for a revolution that would finally unleash the full potential of Web – a way of embracing users that came to be termed Web 2.0.

From Digg through to Second Life and the massive success of Wikipedia, Delicious and YouTube, John Heilemann shows us that it is the users of the Net that give it its great power and the companies and institutions that have embraced this have been the biggest winners in the digital gold rush.