Introduction 2.0

The way we customize our things says a lot about who we are.

Today, everywhere we look, we are surrounded by a convergence of media – videogames, advertisements, and television. We are told what to believe, how to think, and how to act. We are told what's cool and what's not, what we should buy, what we should wear, and what music we should listen to.

Hardware hacking has never been about what the mainstream media thinks. It's about creativity, education, experimentation, personalization, and just having fun. This book is no different.

Game Console Hacking focuses on modifying our favorite videogame systems to do things they were never intended to do, to add features that we've always wanted but the vendors never gave us, or to create something that has never been done before.

This book is a little bit different than what you might be used to. We cover a wide spectrum of gaming consoles, from the retro and arguably archaic Atari systems, to the teenaged Nintendo NES console, up through the modern consoles like Xbox and PlayStation 2. There's something in here for every type of gamer, whether you like to get your hands dirty with modifying hardware or whether you're an aspiring game developer. Step-by-step hacks are presented with a slew of pictures to hold your hand along the way, as well as resources to let you jump right in to creating your own games for the systems. It's all about education and inspiring you, the reader, to break the mold of what's considered "acceptable." And best of all, you can do so in the comfort of your own home, without breaking any laws.

Long gone are the days where a few guys can make millions on a self-published videogame they designed in Mom's garage. But, the thrill for homebrew game development is still there; and, it has close ties to hardware hacking in that you are giving the system a touch of your personal creativity, doing things the way you want to. It gives us a sense of ownership that a faceless company can't provide.

There is an underbelly to the videogame industry, which nowadays just seems to only sell multi-million dollar productions with gameplay based on franchise licenses and the same, overused 3D game engines. There are thriving development communities for all the systems we cover in this book. There are people who still yearn to develop games just so they can *play* those games. Sharing code samples, socializing with fellow programmers, hacking videogame systems to allow them to run their custom software, designing games for the sheer thrill of the kill. For gamers, by gamers.

There's something to be said for pouring your heart and soul into a creative game design or hardware hack, and I hope this book will entice you to do so. Inspiration and creativity can't be taught or forced. The possibilities are endless.

The way we customize our things says a lot about who we are.

Who are you?

—Joe Grand, author, hardware hacker, and gamer
July 2004