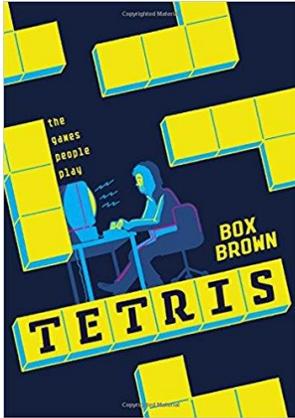


Spotlight on Books



Last year, when it was announced that there is a trilogy of sci-fi movies in the works based on the old Tetris video game, the reaction was understandably one of skepticism. Video games have had a notorious reputation as film inspiration and if games the likes of *World of Warcraft* or *Super Mario Brothers* couldn't pull it off successfully, what chance does a game about fitting falling blocks into place have?

I approached Box Brown's *Tetris*, a graphic novel about the history of the game, with similar doubt. Sure I enjoyed Tetris back in the day, but could the behind the scenes story really be all that exciting? Still, it was nominated for an Eisner Award (perhaps the most prestigious award one could win in the world of comics) and I've seen other authors take what should be an uninteresting topic and turn it into a compelling read (e.g., Mark Kurlansky's *Salt: A World History*), so anything was possible.

Brown begins by introducing us Alexey Pajitnov, a computer scientist in Moscow in the last few years of the former Soviet Union. Pajitnov is instantly likeable. He's as much a philosopher as a computer scientist and a pretty selfless person to boot. Together, Pajitnov and Brown make a solid case for games as art.

Soon, however, it becomes a high stakes business story as Atari, Nintendo, Sega, and a handful of other developers travel the globe trying to secure the rights to Pajitnov's pet project, Tetris. It's complicated by the communist government and language barriers, and mistaken assumptions wind up having dire consequences.

In Brown's adept hands, Tetris becomes a subtle metaphor for people and companies scrambling to fit in in the world of video games, to capitalize on an idea. In other words: Tetris as art.

The visuals are simplistic but sufficient, like Tetris blocks, and a black/white/yellow colour scheme recalls the 1st generation Nintendo Game Boys.

If you are a fan of video games and comics, make sure to come out to Ptarmicon this weekend. Yellowknife Public Library will be there with loads of comics to check out, so make sure to bring your library card!

July 28, 2017

John Mutford, Library Manager