Netscape Time: The Making of the Billion-Dollar Start-Up That Took on Microsoft

By Jim Clark

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From the cofounder of Netscape and the inspiration for Michael Lewis's bestselling *The New, New Thing*, comes a thrilling insider's account of the race to beat Microsoft for control of the Internet.

Netscape was a tiny start-up company that ultimately revolutionized business and communications for the entire world. Jim Clark tells the fascinating story of how he, Marc Andreessen, and a core group of programmers turned an esoteric computer program into a visionary new technology used by millions. Challenged from the start by competition, a seemingly bottomless pit of expenses, and a need for secrecy from the roving eye of Microsoft, Clark's programmers spent days at a stretch in front of their computer screens, rushing to produce their revolutionary Web browser under the enormous pressure of time. Clark vividly re-creates the tense, thrilling atmosphere of the start-up company in a nail-biting tale of drama and suspense. Netscape Time is also an inspiring manual for anyone who wishes to take advantage of the endless business possibilities of today's technology. Indeed, Clark, the only person ever to found three multibillion-dollar start-ups, is perhaps more qualified than any businessman today to show how it's done.

As a business book, as a reflection of our technology culture, and as a purely enjoyable read, *Netscape Time* is perhaps the most significant book about the rise of the Internet ever to be published.

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Editorial Review

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Sitting at your desk, not getting much done, you finally give in to the temptation and click onto www.coolwaytokilltime.com. Little do you know, as you check on the price of cattle futures in Bolivia, that you have Jim Clark to thank for this wonderful research tool and time waster. Clark didn't invent the Internet (that was the Pentagon, looking for an inscrutable way to transmit classified information--or Al Gore, if you can believe him) or even the World Wide Web (that was a Swiss researcher named Tim Berners-Lee). Nor did he invent the first Web browser with a graphical interface; that was a pair of University of Illinois computer geeks named Marc Andreessen and Eric Bina. What Clark did was team up with Andreessen to create Netscape, and their first product, Netscape Navigator, made the Net more universally accessible than it had ever been. It also made a lot of people really rich, a fact Clark dwells on in perhaps too much detail.

The story of Netscape alone is thrilling enough, but Clark also gives tremendous insight into the real way American business operates nowadays--the speed, the risks, and the hatred for rivals (*lots* of hatred, mostly for Microsoft and Bill Gates.) Most of the book covers the founding of Netscape Communications, but there's an epilogue, too, discussing the merger of Netscape with America Online, the ongoing battle with Microsoft, and, most important, the impact the Web has had on everyday life. Clark makes a sound argument that Netscape had a lot to do with that. Oh, and did you know it made him rich? *--Lou Schuler*

From Publishers Weekly
In this sharply written account, Clark provides the ultimate insider's look at Netscape from its launch in summer 1994 to its sale to America Online in late 1998. Netscape's origins can be traced to when Clark was forced out of the first company he founded, Silicon Graphics. Bolstered by a "minor fortune" of $15 million, Clark was determined to do financially better for himself in his next venture. At the suggestion of a colleague, Clark met with Marc Andreessen, a recent graduate of the University of Illinois who had led the team that developed the Mosaic Web browser. The two hit it off, and after some false starts, they decided to form a company dedicated to building a "Mosaic killer." With the decision made, events moved at a rapid pace (what he calls "Netscape Time"). As Clark tells Netscape's story, he sheds light on the different mindsets of managers, programmers and venture capitalists. Of his programmers he writes: "these were my rock 'n' roll stars. I wasn't about to make them unhappy by telling them to grow up." His tale of keeping them all togetherAand of recruiting Jim Barksdale to be CEOAas Netscape headed for its famously successful IPO is one of the most engrossing parts of the book. There's even a villain: Microsoft. Clark charges that monopolistic practices (i.e., bundling its Web browser with Windows) allowed Microsoft to weaken Netscape to the point where it was forced to merge with AOL. Clark's hatred of Microsoft is evident throughout the book, but that doesn't mar a heady tale of one of Silicon Valley's greatest success stories. Author tour. (June)
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From Library Journal
This book captures the drama of Netscape Communications' phenomenal success. The heroes are author Clark, one of the cofounders of Netscape, and a small band of programmers who set out to write a better Internet browser than Mosaic, on which many of them had worked for minimal pay and little official credit. The villains are the owners of Mosaic and Microsoft, who had a vested interest in maintaining the status quo (despite arguably inferior software) and who put roadblocks in Netscape's path. Within 15 months of Netscape's founding, its initial public offering of stock valued the company at $2.2 billion. But the Netscape

success story closes on a sour note: at the time of writing, a Justice Department investigation against Microsoft that was prompted by Netscape had not reached its conclusion, and Netscape had agreed to merge with America Online because it feared being pushed out of business by Microsoft. Throughout, Clark stresses the competitiveness of most of the computer industry (with the notable exception of Microsoft) and the need to improve products constantly and rapidlyAin his words, in "Netscape time."AA.J. Sobczak, Covina, CA

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Kimberly Williams:

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