The Evolution of the PlayStation Logo

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Days before opening this document and typing the first of many sentences to come, I would let hours pass by talking to my closest friends on my PlayStation 4. Sony PlayStation is a popular trademarked video gaming brand, whose very name reverberates through the minds of 90s babies and Gen Z Teens alike. Released in 1994, PlayStation has cultivated a revered fanbase of millions, with a console in 54% of all American households by 2015 (*Home gaming console household penetration in the United States from 2012 to 2016 - statista.com*). As I pushed my research project to the side, my mind slipped into a state of wonder trying to trace back the history of PlayStation, but more specifically the history of PlayStation's logo. As countless PlayStation gamers are aware, their logo has taken a different shape and aesthetic with each new console generation. To better understand the history of the PlayStation logo, we must dive deeply into the steps in-between each evolution - the many typefaces used, discarded logo drafts, and the logo designers' themselves.

Before PlayStation's premiere in 1994, Japanese graphic designer, Manabu Sakamoto, worked on creating a logo for the brand's first console. The PlayStation's key selling points were its improved audio quality and ability to run larger videogames with three-dimensional models.

Sakamoto wanted to depict the console's 3D gaming ability in a sleek, eye-catching way, without using a simple 3D effect on the text. Sakamoto's creative process relied heavily on sketching numerous potential logo ideas, then refining the designs that look the best. His logo pitches were rejected time and time again on

Figure 1. Sakamoto's Logo Design Sketchbook. http://kanakokikaku.com/sony-ism/sony_arrowgraph/

his quest to create the perfect branding for PlayStation. Eventually, Sakamoto created a logo design that used the letters "PS" to create an optical illusion that suggested that the letters had a depth of field by using the "S" to shadow the front-facing "P". Sakamoto also designed the one-of-a-kind typeface seen in the final logo. Other researchers along with myself can't find the exact name of the typeface, but it is very similar to the *Zrnic* font made by Raymond Larabie, a Canadian graphic designer and founder of *Typodermic Fonts Inc (typodermicfonts.com)*. Sakamoto also implemented a certain color scheme to this logo to symbolize PlayStation's

Figure 2. Sakamoto's digitized PlayStation logo designs. http://kanakokikaku.com/sony-ism/sony_arrowgraph/

ideals: Red for passion, yellow for happiness, green for excellence and innovation, and blue for patience and liberty. On the first day of release, the PlayStation sold 100,000 units in Japan, and within the decade, went on to sell over 100 million units (*The PlayStation Book 2015 UK - archive.org*). Sakamoto's logo helped carry PlayStation to the top of the videogame industry.

While Sakamoto's PlayStation logo remained the official branding of SONY PlayStation, each new console following the first received a personalized logo. Starting with the PlayStation 2, released in 2000, the logo design shown on the console and in the software changed dramatically to a more modern 2-dimensional model reading "PS2". "PS2" is in a san serif, futuristic typeface most accurately depicted by the "Blue Players" font by Lyric Type. The icon sports a color gradient, going from a bright light blue at the bottom to an ashy darker blue at the top. This logo helped boost PlayStation 2 sales as it went on to become the best selling console of all time.

Figure 3. PlayStation 2 Logo. https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/explore/ps4/playstation-through-the-years/

As for the PlayStation 3 (PS3), released in 2006, branding for this console took an interesting turn. Shying away from the slim, sleek typography shown in the PS2, the PS3 lettering used a thicker, less geometric typeface. "PS3" lost its previous generation's blue tone and became white. The typeface used is very similar to the italicized "Homoarakhan" and is also the same typeface that was implemented in SONY's "*Spiderman* [2 and 3]" feature films.

Figure 4. PlayStation 3 Typography compared to Spiderman 2 Typography. https://www.engadget.com/2007-03-29-ken-kutaragi-insisted-on-spider-man-font-for-ps3.html

Furthermore, in 2009, Sony changed the funky font to a non-italicized san serif typeface to one that is extremely similar to "Phatboy Slim" by *TracerTong Fontworks*. It resembled the PS2 2-Dimensional aesthetic and maintained a clean direct appearance. Sony Computer Entertainment executive Kaz Hirai explained that the company wanted to "set a new direction for the PS3"(Kaz Hirai, 2009) when asked about the logo change. He also replied that from a practical standpoint "when you have PlayStation 3 spelt out, the aspect ratio was such that if you wanted it on a billboard it became tiny" (Kaz Hirai, 2009), thus changing the logo for better visibility.

The PlayStation 4 was released in 2013 and with it came a new age for the PlayStation logo. Unlike the PlayStation 1 - 3 which had the same company logo but changed their console branding, the PlayStation 4 showcased color changes to Sakamoto's original company logo. The logo had been changed to use solid colors instead of the previously block colored design. This

tweak occurred in 2009 along with the PS3 logo change, but the PS4 was the first console to display the new color changes. The new logo has worn the colors white, black, red and blue so far. The PlayStation 4 released modeling a reflective version of the logo, a white version, and a "classic" version using Sakamoto's iconic color scheme. Sony PlayStation produced a clean, modern adaptation of the iconic original PlayStation logo and is the current logo for the Sony PlayStation Franchise today in 2020.

Figure 7. Evolution of Sakamoto's logo design. https://1000logos.net/playstation-logo/

Figure 8. Playstation 4 Pro with logo. https://www.bestbuy.com/site/sony-playstation-4-pro-console-jet-black/5388900.p?skuId=5388900

Figure 9. PlayStation 4 controller & charging dock with logo. https://www.amazon.com/Controller-Gear-PS4-Stand-PlayStation-4/dp/B015KJAQX6

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