

The Evolution of the PlayStation Logo

Damani Douglas

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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 capabilities in a modern, eye-catching way, without using a simple 3D effect on the text. Sakamoto’s creative process relied heavily on sketching numerous potential logo ideas, refining the designs that look the best.



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

His logo pitches were rejected time and time again on his quest to produce the perfect branding for SONY PlayStation. Sakamoto created a logo design that used the letters “PS”. He shadowed the “S” behind the front-facing “P” to portray a three-dimensional space. Sakamoto also designed the original typeface used in the final logo. It is very similar to, *Zrnica*, a typeface designed by Raymond Larabie, Canadian graphic designer and founder of *Typodermic Fonts Inc* (typodermicfonts.com). Sakamoto also implemented a quadratic color scheme to his logo design to symbolize PlayStation’s ideals: Red for passion, yellow for happiness, green for excellence and innovation, and blue for patience and



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

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 videogaming industry.

While Sakamoto's logo remained the official branding of SONY PlayStation, each new console following the first received a personalized emblem. 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 emblem reading "PS2". "PS2" is in a futuristic, sans serif typeface most accurately depicted by the *Blue Players* font by *Lyric Type*. The icon sports a cool-toned 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

(<https://www.playstation.com/en-gb/explore/ps4/playstation-through-the-years/>).



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 a controversial 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 used 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>



Figure 5. Typography of the PlayStation 3 logo. <https://www.vidaextra.com/cultura/sony-cambia-el-logo-de-ps3-por-tercera-vez-en-tres-anos-y-eso-no-es-normal>

Furthermore, in 2009, Sony changed the funky font to a non-italicized sans serif typeface that is remarkably similar to, *Phatboy Slim*, by *TracerTong Fontworks*. It resembled the PS2's two-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 spelled out, the aspect ratio was such that if you wanted it on a billboard it

became tiny” (Kaz Hirai,

2009). The logo change

provided better visibility in

public advertisements.

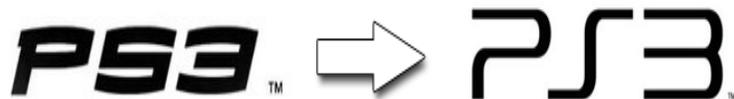


Figure 6. Redesign of PlayStation 3 Typography. <https://ericsadblog.wordpress.com/tag/playstation-3/>

The PlayStation 4 was released in 2013, bringing about 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 previous block colored design. This tweak occurred in 2009 along with the PS3 logo change, but the PS4 was the first console to



Figure 7. Playstation 4 Pro with reflective logo. <https://www.bestbuy.com/site/sony-playstation-4-pro-console-jet-black/5388900.p?skuId=5388900>

display the new color changes. The new logo has worn the solid colors: white, black, red, and blue. The PlayStation 4 released with a reflective version of the logo, a white version, and a “classic” version using Sakamoto's quadratic color scheme. Sony PlayStation produced a striking, contemporary adaptation of the original PlayStation logo and is their current logo in 2020.

SONY PlayStation has become an international videogaming franchise by combining innovative technology with bold, direct, and unforgettable branding. Manabu Sakamoto's thorough design process bolstered PlayStation's massive success.



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

The franchise used their newly found success to experiment with new logo designs for future consoles while upholding the luxury of Sakamoto's original design. Through constant evolutions

and reflective adaptations, SONY PlayStation has branded themselves with their eyes set on the pinnacle of the videogaming industry.



Figure 8. PlayStation 4 controller & charging dock with logo. <https://www.amazon.com/Controller-Gear-PS4-Stand-PlayStation-4/dp/B015KJAQX6>

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