



Hart Getzen

There's no shortage of ways to keep us gamers entertained these days. From videogames themselves to game-based movies (OK, so most of them are rubbish), comics (most of them pretty good, actually!) and merchandise, we're undeniably spoilt for choice. But what about books? Not books based on existing game franchises, but rather playful books written specifically for this gaming generation? There isn't many of them around, that's for sure – and that's where Hart Getzen comes in.

Aimed at young male 'tween' and teen readers – and basically anybody familiar with the online gaming realm – author Hart is writing something very special indeed. His upcoming series, *Echo's Revenge*, is a series of new novels about a technological creature named ECHO-7 that has somehow managed to escape its digital origins and manifest itself in the real world. The first novel in the series, *The Ultimate Game*, will tell the story of two young boys with an addiction to an online game named ECHO, which they use to escape the harsh realities of an abusive home life. When

they decide to finally run away and escape it all, the game follows them as part of a nefarious scheme to target gamers for its own ghastly doings.

But most interestingly of all, Hart Getzen isn't just stopping at the written word to tell his tale. An official website will keep the interactive story moving through ARG long beyond the covers, and with a strong focus on teaching readers the core elements of the STEM (science, technology, engineering, mathematics) frameworks that are likely to shape the world of tomorrow, this ambitious offering is about much more than just a series of books.

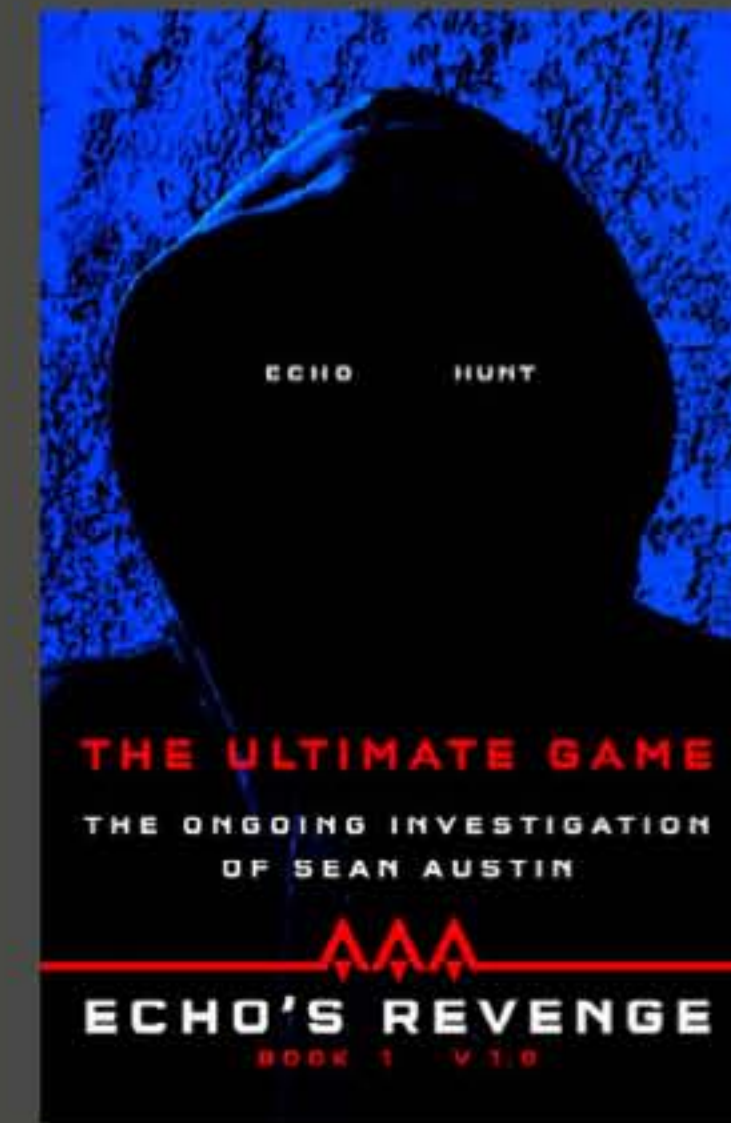
We caught up with Hart Getzen himself to find out more about his intriguing project.

Hi Hart. Who inspired you to become a writer, and what has been the biggest influence for you in your writing?

As far as direct writing inspiration, I have to say Mark Twain, Anton Chekhov, Ray Bradbury and Robert Heinlein were among my favourite writers; but it wasn't

actual writers who inspired me to become a writer. I did it out of necessity as a simulation producer. I started out as a painter, then moved into motion pictures. Ultimately, I found myself producing large screen motion simulation entertainment in IMAX 3D, such as the *Race for Atlantis* ride at Caesar's Palace in Las Vegas. Eventually, for technical and aesthetic reasons, I found that I had to write the simulations so that production would go smoothly.

What caused me to eventually write novels was something that I realized one day as I was sitting in the *Race for Atlantis* theatre while it was being built. I was thinking about the thousands of man-hours, tons of steel, concrete, and life support systems that were necessary for the show. I wondered about the possibility of some sort of immersive, social entertainment I could create almost alone, without a crew of 600 people. I thought a lot about this idea until digital publishing and web design evolved to where it is today, and hybrid formats were possible.



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The hybrid medium I adopted was writing novels in tandem with creating a network of websites to support an Alternate Reality Game.

Where and when is the *Echo's Revenge* series set?

The novel is set in a small town of Meadowbrook in the state of Washington. Today. One of the central themes of the investigation and ARG is that ECHO-7 can be anywhere right now, even in your backyard. There is no limit to where ECHO-7 can be at any moment (except underwater), given its sentience, stealth, and shape-shifting capabilities.

What gave you the idea for *Echo's Revenge*? Was you interested in exploring areas of STEM as a "tween"?

I've always been very interested in STEM because my father

was a chemical engineer, mathematician and physicist. I grew up in physics labs and computer facilities. To this day I feel completely at home in cold, vented, laboratories saturated with the alien scents of complex molecules floating around and the sounds of machines whirring.

I got the idea for *ECHO's Revenge* because my sons were playing so many video games and I noticed that books really couldn't compete with that intensely engaging immersive format. They challenged me to write a thrilling, terrifying book which had the attributes of a game, that is to say, shifting 1st and 3rd person perspectives and information coming at the reader from outside the narrative (like online communications, etc.).