Ethnomusicology Forum ›

Volume 18, 2009 - Issue 1: Screened Music: Global Perspectives

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From Pac-Man to Pop Music: Interactive Audio in Games and New Media

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Pages 168-170 | Published online: 28 May 2009

Cite this article https://doi.org/10.1080/17411910902790440

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From Pac-Man to Pop Music: Interactive Audio in Games and New Media
KAREN COLLINS (Ed.)
Aldershot, Ashgate, 2008
224 pp., ISBN 978-0-7546-6211-2 (pbk £16.99), 978-0-7546-6200-6 (cloth £55.00)

We are in the midst of a media revolution. The music industry is in crisis, and CD retailers are foregrounding games rather than music carriers. Young people spend much of their leisure time at the computer, not least playing games which are absorbing enough to lead some to addiction. If these are developments with implications as far-reaching as those of the advent of film or recorded sound, then their documentation and theorisation are clearly imperative. In her wide-ranging collection of essays, Karen Collins has brought together computer scientists, composers, musicologists and sound designers who collectively give an engaging impression of this rapidly evolving field.

The analogy with the importance of earlier media technologies is taken up by Holly Tessler in the first chapter, which underlines not only the extent of uptake of new media but their integration into the marketing strategies of record companies alongside radio, MTV and the press. Tessler provides rich detail on how games can be tied into rights management and 'break' new bands with gamers who closely shadow the demographics of the mainstream music market. Anitti-Ville Kärjä writes on a related theme but concentrates on the specific example of Finnish Indie rock band Poets of the Fall, whose international exposure appears to have been mainly due to inclusion of their music in a first-person shooter game. The chapter uses this as a base to explore various familiar issues such as the local/global dichotomy, and creativity versus authenticity.

In an informal and entertaining contribution based on an industry conference, Peter Drescher sketches the succession of serendipity and design that has been the history of the ultimate vernacular *Gebrauchsmusik* of our time: ring-tones. He delineates a scramble for controlling revenue in the shifting sands of technological innovation but predicts the demise of what has become a multi-million dollar business. In a jargon-laden technical chapter, which leaves something to be desired in English style and accuracy, computer scientists Agnès Guerraz and Jaques Lemordant explore some possible software problems and solutions of adaptive digital audio, or audio which reacts to player behaviour, rather than simply playing back set tracks at set points. This kind of sound will make games more interactive and immersive, and

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