

Kamp

Four Ways of Hearing Video Game Music

Four Ways of Hearing Video Game Music offers a novel account of the ways in which video games invite us to hear and listen to their music. By taking a phenomenological approach to characterize music in video games, author Michiel Kamp asks what it is we hear in the music when we play a game. Drawing on past phenomenological approaches to music as well as studies of music listening in a variety of disciplines such as aesthetics and ecological psychology, Kamp explains four main ways of hearing the same piece of music—through background, aesthetic, ludic, and semiotic hearing. As a background, music is not attended to at all, but can still be described in terms of moods, affordances, or equipment. Aesthetic hearing is a reflective attitude that invites hermeneutic interpretation; ludic hearing on the other hand invites "playing along" to the music, either through embodied movement, or in response to the music's cinematic or theatrical connotations. Finally, in semiotic hearing, Kamp argues that we hear music as transparent symbols or signals that provide information about the state of a game. The book investigates these four categories through detailed case studies of video games from a variety of eras and genres accompanied by gameplay recordings and images on a companion website.



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43,50 €

40,65 € (zzgl. MwSt.)

Lieferfrist: bis zu 10 Tage

Artikelnummer: 9780197651223

Medium: Buch

ISBN: 978-0-19-765122-3

Verlag: Oxford University Press, USA

Erscheinungstermin: 09.01.2024

Sprache(n): Englisch

Auflage: Erscheinungsjahr 2024

Serie: Oxford Music / Media

Produktform: Kartoniert

Gewicht: 318 g

Seiten: 224

Format (B x H): 163 x 226 mm



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29.07.2024 | 00:28 Uhr

