Miller

Playing Along

Music, Video Games, and Networked Amateurs

Why don't Guitar Hero players just pick up real guitars? What happens when millions of people play the role of a young black gang member in Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas? How are YouTube-based music lessons changing the nature of amateur musicianship? This book is about play, performance, and participatory culture in the digital age. Miller shows how video games and social media are bridging virtual and visceral experience, creating dispersed communities who forge meaningful connections by "playing along" with popular culture. Playing Along reveals how digital media are brought to bear in the transmission of embodied knowledge: how a Grand Theft Auto player uses a virtual radio to hear with her avatar's ears; how a Guitar Hero player channels the experience of a live rock performer; and how a beginning guitar student translates a two-dimensional, pre-recorded online music lesson into three-dimensional physical practice and an intimate relationship with a distant teacher. Through a series of engaging ethnographic case studies, Miller demonstrates that our everyday experiences with interactive digital media are gradually transforming our understanding of musicality, creativity, play, and participation.

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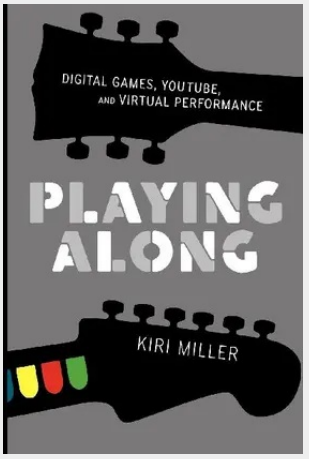

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