Cheng

Sound Play

Video Games and the Musical Imagination

Video games open portals into fantastical worlds where imaginative play prevails. The virtual medium seemingly provides us with ample opportunities to behave and act out with relative safety and impunity. Or does it? Sound Play explores the aesthetic, ethical, and sociopolitical stakes of our engagements with gaming's audio phenomena-from sonic violence to synthesized operas, from democratic music-making to vocal sexual harassment. Author William Cheng shows how the simulated environments of games empower designers, composers, players, and scholars to test and tinker with music, noise, speech, and silence in ways that might not be prudent or possible in the real world. In negotiating utopian and alarmist stereotypes of video games, Sound Play synthesizes insights from across musicology, sociology, anthropology, communications, literary theory, and philosophy. With case studies that span Final Fantasy VI, Silent Hill, Fallout 3, The Lord of the Rings Online, and Team Fortress 2, this book insists that what we do in there-in the safe, sound spaces of games-can ultimately teach us a great deal about who we are and what we value (musically, culturally, humanly) out here.

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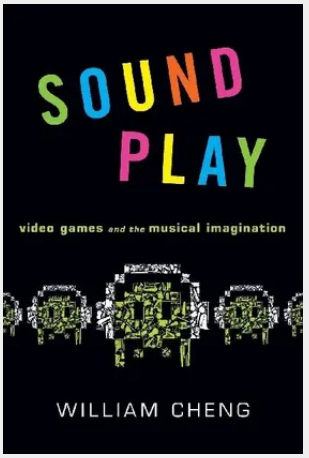

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