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***From Pac-Man to Pop Music: Interactive Audio in Games and New Media.* Edited by Karen Collins. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. 207 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6211-2**

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Although the absence of intended references to hits by Vera Lynn and Nat 'King' Cole renders Hoggart's 1957 commentary generalised, this highlights the pervasiveness of the trends critiqued and, usefully, obliges us to think of examples, including later songs. This is not difficult. Most extensively, Hoggart attacks variations of 'cheering-up songs' (p. 200–4) – characteristics of which define, for instance, Simon and Garfunkel's 'Bridge Over Troubled Water', Bob Dylan's 'Make You Feel My Love' and U2's 'Stuck in a Moment'.

To constructively utilise Hoggart's commentaries, it is necessary to read this book critically and expansively. My experiences of discussing it in seminars suggest that for these reasons – alongside the still-resonant evocations of working-class life – *The Uses of Literacy* makes a magnificently stimulating text on undergraduate and postgraduate courses.

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***From Pac-Man to Pop Music: Interactive Audio in Games and New Media.* Edited by Karen Collins. Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008. 207 pp. ISBN: 978-0-7546-6211-2 doi:10.1017/S0261143010000206**

Video games are rapidly becoming the most powerful cultural form of our era. In 2008 they outstripped music and video combined in the UK with a predicted revenue of £4.64 billion. Expansion across the video games industry is marked by product diversification and a widening constituency of gamers embracing popular platforms like the Nintendo *Wii* as well as Hollywood-sized budgets for game projects. All this has happened during a period of restructuring and contraction of older media in the wake of digitalisation. Games had a certain advantage, of course. They were already digital. But they were also most often associated with headline-grabbing moral panics around juvenile delinquency. Today video games are gaining a degree of legitimacy throughout the circuits of late capitalist enterprise and scholarship. Literary critics for canonical publications like the *London Review of Books* have even begun to recognise the narrative merits of popular games like *Bioshock* and *Fallout 3* while the development of the academic discipline of 'games studies' indicates the coming of age of scholars who grew up playing first and second generation video games.

This collection of 12 essays represents something of the flavour of this burgeoning interest in video games and the far-reaching implications for music. For it is in music that the impact of video games has arguably been most spectacular. Part I of the book sets the context to this state of affairs, showing how a restricted field of computer audio culture (with its primitive *pac-man* 'waca wacas') developed into a significant

component of the popular music industry. Tessler's essay, for instance, shows how closer but by no means seamless links have been forged between record labels and video games in the case of the dominant gaming power, EA Sports. The increasingly symbiotic relationship between music and video games points towards a potential de-traditionalisation of production systems and a radical diffusion of the channels of music consumption. Such channels include ringtones and mobile phone applications, and subsequent chapters show how convergent technologies tap into consumer desire for the customisation of music, providing new opportunities for content providers and composers. Technical considerations are covered in essays on granular synthesis and tools for composing dynamic, non-linear music fit for gameplay aesthetics. Kaae's essay, in particular, is a useful theoretical exploration of historical models of non-linearity and phenomenological time, from Stockhausen to techno. An essay by Carlsson on the chip-tune scene and musical manifestations of techno-nostalgia also provides a neat overview of a micro-world drawn to the sounds of old soundcards.

Like most edited collections, the quality of the collection is uneven and the range of approaches leaves one a little bewildered. But as I write in a month that saw *The Beatles Rock Band* game released and a legal furore erupt over the nature of Kurt Cobain's avatar in *Guitar Hero 5*, this is clearly the time to reflect on how video games are growing up and growing into other media.

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***Linthead Stomp: The Creation of Country Music in the Piedmont South.* By Patrick Huber. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2008. 416 pp. ISBN 978-0-9078-3225-7 (hb)**

***Country: A Regional Exploration.* By Ivan Tribe. Westport, CT and London: Greenwood Press, 2006. 283 pp. ISBN 0-313-33026-3 (hb). doi:10.1017/S0261143010000218**

It is an interesting feature of country music that, despite the continued projection of the rural in the music and its accompanying discourse, the genre has always relied on urban centres for its dissemination. From the recording sessions in Bristol, Tennessee that constitute the moment when what we now recognise as country ostensibly came into being to the concentration of the country music industry in Nashville, urban performers, executives, broadcasters and audiences have played crucial roles. This importance is highlighted in Patrick Huber's *Linthead Stomp*, which concentrates on the emergence of country music (then referred to as 'hillbilly music') among millworkers in the Piedmont area – which was the most heavily industrialised and urbanised area in the US South during the first half of the 20th century due to a massive concentration of textile mills (in 1927 the Southern Piedmont became the largest centre of textile production in the USA).

Huber's thesis is summed up in the following sentence: 'the commercial broadcasting and recording of hillbilly music between 1922 and 1942 marked the first time that the southern white working class played a central role in shaping American popular music and mass culture, and no other group of southern industrial workers did