Still, Ewalt mines some rich material around what it means to play and, in particular, play in a way that is outside what many people regard as socially acceptable. Such play can even be liberating; choosing a game character can extend to the player's real life. As another LARPer, who left her bad relationship and a dead-end job because that was what her *character* would do, commented: "If I can do heroic things when I'm running around in the woods, why can't I do them here at home?" (p. 195).

This book will be of use to scholars who study role playing and who are interested in Dungeons and Dragons in particular. In addition to the history behind the brand and ethnographic approaches to play sessions, Ewalt points toward other studies of the game from sociological- and performance-studies contexts. More generally, the book will benefit anyone who studies fandom or adult play. I applaud Ewalt for his research and the time spent documenting play, and I hope to see more investigations of role-playing games and other tabletop games in the future.

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Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance

Kiri Miller
New York: Oxford University Press, 2012. Notes, references, index. 272 pp. $27.95 paper. ISBN: 9780199753468

From Double Dutch to limbo competitions, games that meld music, performance, and play are easy to find. In more recent years, the rise and spread of digital technologies have given way to a whole new, and ever-widening, range of practices that combine, recombine, and expand upon this tradition. This is particularly true of digital games (video games, arcade games, and computer games) in which music has long fulfilled a core function, both in terms of adding significantly to games' narratives and aesthetics, as well as providing an intuitive way of giving feedback to players. Some of the early arcade games had soundtracks that contained hidden clues about the right time to make a particular move or that forewarned players they were running out of time or were about to experience a change of speed. More recently, rhythm games, such as *PaRappa the Rapper* (1996) and *Dance Dance Revolution* (1998)*,* have incorporated beat as a core component of their game-play mechanics—where a player's moves are only successful if made in musical time. As digital games have become more social (and more socially acceptable), events such as weekly *Rock Band* competitions at the local pub and sharing a musical creation made in the game *Sound Shapes* (2012) with thousands of other players online are increasingly common.

Kiri Miller's *Playing Along: Digital Games, YouTube, and Virtual Performance* is a timely and important work that tackles multiple aspects of the complex intermingling of music, performance, and play that is currently taking place within digital culture. The book features a range of relevant examples and draws important linkages between contempo-

rary and traditional leisure practices. The results of the author's own research in this area—which includes interviews with players, ethnographic fieldwork and firsthand experimentation with the games and practices involved—are described in close detail in three parts, divided by the case study or practice examined. Part 1 examines the highly popular and controversial single-player console game *Grand Theft Auto: San Andreas* (2004), in which music plays an integral role not only in setting the tone for game play, but also within the players' own in-game identity performance and role-play experiences. Part 2 focuses on music-performance games *Guitar Hero* (2005) and *Rock Band* (2007) and delves into some of the uncomfortable questions these games arguably raise about issues of authenticity (playing music) and consumerism (playing *at playing* music). Last, part 3 considers some of the ways leisure activities are learned and taught through YouTube and other social media, as well as how such tools are increasingly used to establish new, leisure-based communities of practice. *Playing Along* also comes with a companion website, which features a series of audio and video clips of some of the interviews with players and online videos discussed in the book.

To help the reader navigate this, at times, dauntingly diverse range of topics, Miller supplies an eloquent and well-grounded theoretical framework at the book's outset. The concepts and questions Miller lays out in the introductory chapter not only provide a useful way to map and make sense of the research laid out in parts 1 to 3, but they also help establish the interdisciplinary approach that

Miller adopts in both her research and in the book itself. In crafting this approach, Miller draws on ethnomusicology, leisure studies, play studies, and game studies, as well as texts and theories associated with cultural studies, social theory, and education, to name but a few. In particular, the use and development of the term "playing along," a core analytic construct that resurfaces again and again, is likely to become one of the book's most enduring scholarly contributions. Here, playing along is not seen as merely conforming or mimicking, but as a (potentially) creative and fundamentally collaborative set of practices, which share a unique relationship to the technologies, people, and industries that mediate them. Such terms are enormously useful in not only identifying but thinking through the many parallels that exist among musical, playful, and performative experiences.

Miller brings together works and concepts that are not often combined within the literature on games and play, and she makes sure to provide adequate contextualization throughout. For students and play scholars who have not yet had a chance to examine the literature emerging out of digital game studies, *Playing Along* will serve as a useful introduction to digital games (how they work, what players think about them) and some of the areas where play and game studies overlap. However, for those who are familiar with digital games, some of the more detailed explanations provided may be a bit tedious. Minute details about *Guitar Hero*'s notation configurations, for instance, at times detracted, or at the very least distracted from—rather than supplemented—the meatier and much more

compelling points found in Miller's own interpretations and analysis.

Although its comprehensive and multi-faceted approach is one of the book's core strengths, it is also one of its main weaknesses. While there are obviously important continuities between the various case studies and technologies that Miller has elected to include, some of the examples featured in part 3 veer just a little too far away from the themes that were so cogently established in the first two parts of the book. In these final chapters, the focus shifts away from games and play under a fairly tenuous pretext. Given the plethora of game-related alternative examples that Miller could have used in these sections instead, such as the widespread use of "walkthrough" videos to learn to play specific games and game levels, or the hybridized sense of embodiment experienced while playing Xbox Kinect games, this shift is puzzling. Although knowledge sharing through social media is clearly an important aspect of any digitally mediated community of practice, and while the author's forays into guitar lessons and yoga instruction are interesting, these chapters ultimately felt like they belonged in some other book. That said, Miller's accessible, theoretically grounded approach, as well as her meticulous handling of her research subjects (both human and technological), will likely keep readers engaged even as they are unexpectedly detoured into the realms of conga and cybershala.

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Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming

T. L. Taylor
Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2012.
Appendix, notes, bibliography, index. 304 pp. $29.95 cloth. ISBN: 9780262017374

In *Raising the Stakes: E-Sports and the Professionalization of Computer Gaming,* author T. L. Taylor examines the ups and downs of a slowly emerging industry, e-sports (electronic sports). The e-sports industry aims to turn real-time video game competition into the next major professional sport—complete with franchises, broadcast tournaments, superstar players, and mogul team and league managers. Those who would make e-sports a success point to South Korea, the only country so far in which the industry has taken hold. Taylor tells us that tournaments like the World Cyber Games draw sponsors like Coca-Cola, Microsoft, and Samsung and that Korean Telecom companies, and even the Korean Navy have—or sponsor—teams. Outside of the promised land of South Korea, however, e-sports have struggled and exist as a generally small, niche industry.

Taylor's book does an excellent job of examining e-sports through numerous lenses. Providing historical context, she takes us back to the roots of e-sports, delving into the early days of informal, head-to-head video game competitions around the first computer game, *Space War!* (1962) and the inclusion of high-score record keeping on arcade machines to arcade-based tournaments (still happening today on the old machines like *Pac-*