In this short book, the leading German cultural critic Diedrich Diederichsen puts forward a fresh and original account of pop music. He argues that pop music is not so much a form of music but rather a constellation of different media channels, social spaces and behavioural systems, of which music is only part. As a constellation, pop music relates to other forms of music – popular, classical or folk – in the way that photography relates to painting, or cinema to theatre. Its own logic of attraction is based less on compositions and the expression of subjectivity and more on indexicality, real or pseudo-involuntary effects as recorded by sound technologies, and on studio discipline and staging, and hence on performance. Pop music came into existence when recipients became involved via a range of diverse and decentralized outlets like TV, transistor radio, 7" singles, glossy magazines and jukeboxes in public spaces. They had to create a virtual unity out of these heterogeneous outputs in a process of active reception. Experiencing pop music is more than an act of listening: it is immersing oneself in an alternative ontological regime.

By elaborating his innovative account of pop music as a constellation, Diederichsen develops a theory of pop music that distinguishes itself from sociology, cultural studies, media studies and ethnography while at the same time drawing on and encompassing them all.
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Diedrich Diederichsen is Professor of Theory, Practice and Communication of Contemporary Art at the Vienna Academy for Fine Arts.

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