

## JITTERBUGS WITH ATTITUDES. AN ESSAY ON THE PROBLEMATIC RELATIONSHIP OF POPULAR MUSIC AND POLITICS

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### Abstract

This essay discusses the communication system of popular music, i.e. communication between musicians and listeners, to find out why music is such an imperfect means to convey unambiguous political messages. Music as a communication system is described as a noncommittal, temporal reality comparable to a game with rules of communication that differ from those of reality of everyday life. Things said or done in music are therefore less obligatory than spoken statements in everyday reality. Music as a medium is rather used to produce unity, not to convey meaning. The communication system allows musicians to control attention or togetherness but not to control whether their audience understands the meaning of a song correctly. Therefore, music has developed no stable semantics. As a medium that produces a feeling of unity music has a strong group building function. These groups, however, are only temporal. Adorno's argument in »On Popular Music« is criticised: the time someone spends inside the fictitious world of popular music is not a waste of time that should rather be filled with conscious studies of music but a virtual realm for experimenting with attitudes, behaviour, and forms of communication.