

Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies and the Truth About Reality

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This is not your typical Zen book. Brad Warner, a young punk who grew up to be a Zen master, spares no one. This bold new approach to the "Why?" of Zen Buddhism is as strongly grounded in the tradition of Zen as it is utterly revolutionary. Warner's voice is hilarious, and he calls on the wisdom of everyone from punk and pop culture icons to the Buddha himself to make sure his points come through loud and clear. As it prods readers to question everything, Hardcore Zen is both an approach and a departure, leaving behind the soft and lyrical for the gritty and stark perspective of a new generation.

The subtitle says it all: there has never been a book like this.

Brad Warner lives in California. He has studied Soto Zen with Gudo Wafu Nishijima. If there is such a thing as a Zen Master (and there isn't), he is one (and he's not). In the early 80s, he was the bassist for ODFx (or Zero Defex), a hardcore punk band. After ODFx bit the dust, he made five albums under the band name Dementia 13. After living in Japan for some time, he returned to the United States in 2012 to start the Dogen Sangha of Los Angeles. "FIVE STARS. An engrossing and entertaining Chicken Soup for the Anarchist, Over-Intellectualizing Soul." Source: About.com

"Man oh man, this is a VERY good book." Author: Janwillem van de Wetering, author of The Empty Mirror and The Corpse on the Dike

"A conversational tone and endless streams of pop references to everything from Minor Threat to The Matrix movies make this a readable and fun book. Warner stresses that enlightenment and meditation do not come easy, which separates his writing dramatically from many other Western books on Buddhism. It's nice to see someone with strong ties to rock coming down so hard on people like Terence McKenna or even the Beatles, who promoted drug use as a way toward higher thought. Although some of Warner's connections between Buddhism and the various pieces of pop culture are simplified, his idea of questioning is particularly striking. Not just questioning authority, but friends, oneself, and, yes, him. This wonderfully engaging primer just might get those more dubious, less willing readers to look at the world a bit differently." Source: School Library Journal

"Here's an autobiography of a quite different flavor. It's full of sly irreverence snappy references to contemporary culture, and amusing tangents. Warner brings messages of substance on many introductory Buddhist topics: Zen retreat, meditation, the precepts, reincarnation etc. For my money, Hardcore Zen is worth two or three of those Buddhism-for-Young-People books." Source: Shambhala Sun

"Warner, an early-'80s hardcore punk musician, discovered Zen in college, moved to Japan to make B-grade monster movies, and eventually became a bona fide Zen master by formally receiving 'dharma transmission.' Yet true to his punk spirit, he relentlessly demands that all teaching, all beliefs, all authority--including his own--must be questioned. By turns wickedly funny, profane, challenging and iconoclastic--but always with genuine kindness--Warner devotes chapters to some common Zen notions such as the oneness of reality ('Why Gene Simmons Is Not a Zen Master'), reincarnation ('In My Next Life I Want to Come Back as a Pair of Lucy Liu's Panties') and the vital importance of the present moment ('Eating a Tangerine Is Real Enlightenment'). Yet this is no litany of Zen orthodoxy designed

for study. Entertaining, bold and refreshingly direct, this book is likely to change the way one experiences other books about Zen--and maybe even the way one experiences reality." Source: Publishers Weekly [starred review]

"Warner's path from inner anarchy to the Heart Sutra ('which profoundly rocked my world') will no doubt resonate with many twenty- and thirty-somethings. Hardcore Zen is Be Here Now for now." Source: Tricycle

"You need to read this book." Author: Bill Stevenson, All / Descendents / Black Flag

"The last thing Buddha reportedly told his followers was to question authority, which is something Brad Warner, as bass player in an Ohio hardcore band and later a toiler on Japanese B-movies, could relate to. Oh, he studied with a Zen master in Japan, too, but pretty obviously, he isn't your typical Buddhist priest, and Hardcore Zen isn't your typical Buddhist book. Warner brings the same tough, skeptical attitude to Zen that he brought to punk rock. Profane and sometimes irreverent; capable of devastating, corrosive humor; Warner pulls no punches. His book is an honest account of his search for truth." Source: Booklist

"Readers are likely to finish Hardcore Zen with a wider understanding of the vast array of human spiritual ideas." Source: Foreword

"In Hardcore Zen [...] Brad Warner tells a lively story of his odyssey from living as a punk rocker in rural Ohio to making B-grade Japanese horror flicks to becoming a Zen priest in Tokyo. A veteran of punk bands Zero Defex and Dementia 13, Warner has practiced zazen (the Zen term for "sitting meditation") for over 15 years, and a couple years ago received Shiho, or Dharma Transmission--formal acknowledgment that he has attained the same enlightenment as the Buddha. [...] The fundamental practices of punk and Buddhism--thrashing in a pit versus sitting in quiet meditation--might seem irreconcilable. And yet, Warner writes, 'in its early days, punk had a lot in common with Zen,' the strand of Buddhism that emerged in China around the seventh century and eventually flourished in Japan. 'The attitude of not conforming blindly to society is an important aspect of Buddhist teaching.'" Source: Boston Globe

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