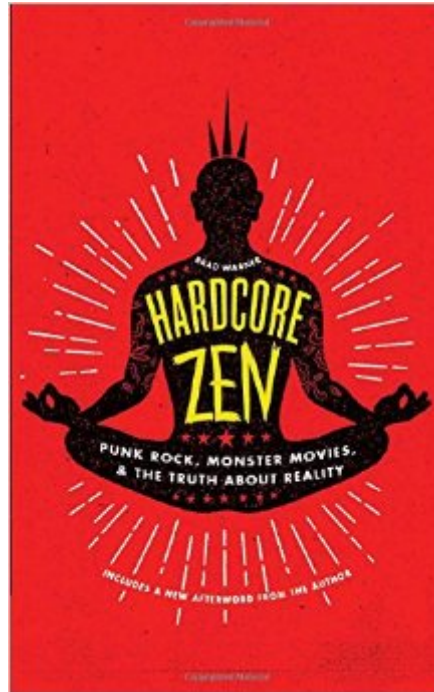


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Hardcore Zen: Punk Rock, Monster Movies And The Truth About Reality



Synopsis

Zen, plain and simple, with no BS. Â 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. This new edition will feature an afterword from the author.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Brad Warner deserves credit for writing a book that both is fun to read and does a pretty good job of explaining the most significant philosophical aspects of Zen Buddhism. Many an experienced practitioner has failed to convey as insightfully as Warner what Zen is about, let alone with such a sense of humor. The book does much of what Warner presumably set out to do: introduce Zen to younger folks who know little or nothing about it and might be put off by more traditional works. He does it without much pandering to the typical inclinations of some members of the target audience, such as the hope that drug use presents a viable alternative, or even supplement, to Zen practice. So I recommend it; you'll learn a lot and you won't be bored. Nonetheless, the book has some significant shortcomings. While Warner does a fine job of presenting the present-centered aspect of

Zen, which is critical, he overlooks almost entirely that Zen, like all Buddhism, is also about compassion. Unfortunately, Warner often expresses the opposite. While it's very tempting to ridicule those who don't "get it," and even more, those who imagine wrongly that they do, and while sniping at the supposedly (or actually) ignorant can be very entertaining when done artfully -- and Warner is good at it, and I have little sympathy for his targets -- his disdain for the benighted becomes wearying after a while, and it reveals that, transmission or no transmission, he has a way to go himself before he is able to walk the talk of the bodhisattva ideal. Arrogance is not merely unattractive, it indicates a lack of realization, and this cannot be entirely negated merely by acknowledging it (which Warner never actually does), and continuing to express it in the name of "accepting what one is."

I love Zen books. For the most part, good books on Zen click with me. The thing is, though... the void surrounding that "for the most part" is glaring at times. The authors often come from a landscape so esoteric or removed from the average Joe-&-Jane's real life situation. Two contemporary writers of Zen I enjoy most are Charlotte Joko Beck and the late Alan Watts, yet when I read them, I can't help but picturing myself next to Alen Ginsburg on a houseboat in Sausalito, or eating macrobiotic rice at The Yogic-Yogurt Cafe in some land like Santa Cruz or La Jolla. It's not that I dislike these notions, but they are so far removed from my reality. I got much a lot out of these books, but a little something was missing. I browsed through Hardcore Zen by Brad Warner. I was initially drawn to the funky cover and thought "Oh cute... another book on 'Zen For the Western Mind.'" Nope. This book is much more than a cute punk-themed book cover. Flipping through the pages, I was amazed to find that this Zen practitioner made references to several major pop-culture icons that I could really relate to. I thought I was the only American from my generation who remembered the episode of Ultraman where a funeral service is held for the scores of space monsters that Ultraman had to kill. Nor did I expect to see a reference to that cringe-inducing 1982 CHIPS episode where evil punk rockers terrorized the Battle of the Bands with their ode "I Dig Pain!" These references to modern media moguls, from Henry Rollins to Ed Wood to Godzilla, are not just trivial inserts serving as a gimmick for a "Zen Book O' the Week" favorite. Brad Warner applies these references to everyday life as many middle class Americans know it.

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