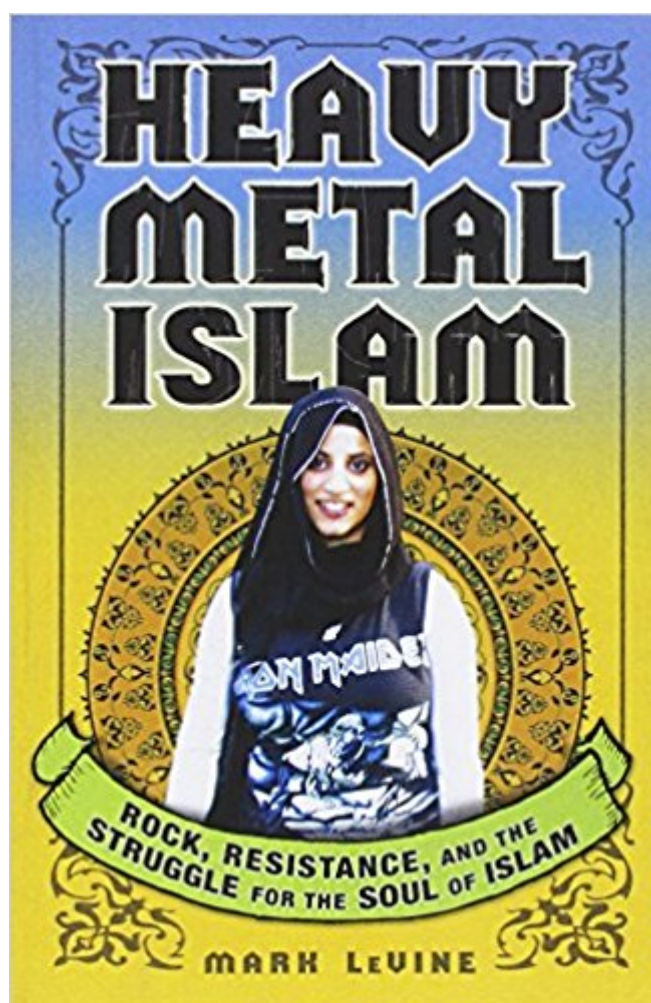


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# Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, And The Struggle For The Soul Of Islam



## Synopsis

“We play heavy metal because our lives are heavy metal.” —Reda Zine, one of the founders of the Moroccan heavy-metal scene  
“Music is the weapon of the future.” —Fela Kuti  
An eighteen-year-old Moroccan who loves Black Sabbath. A twenty-two-year-old rapper from the Gaza Strip. A young Lebanese singer who quotes Bob Marley’s “Redemption Song.” They are as representative of the world of Islam today as the conservatives and extremists we see every night on the news. Heavy metal, punk, hip-hop, and reggae are each the music of protest, and in many cases considered immoral in the Muslim world. This music may also turn out to be the soundtrack of a revolution unfolding across that world. Why, despite governmental attempts to control and censor them, do these musicians and fans keep playing and listening? Partly, of course, for the joy of self-expression, but also because, in this region, everything is political. In *Heavy Metal Islam*, Mark LeVine explores the influence of Western music on the Middle East through interviews with musicians and fans, introducing us young Muslims struggling to reconcile their religion with a passion for music and a desire for change. The result is a revealing tour of contemporary Islamic culture through the evolving music scene in the Middle East and Northern Africa. *Heavy Metal Islam* is a surprising, wildly entertaining foray into a historically authoritarian region where music just might be the true democratizing force.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

Starred Review. With a jolting arrangement of images and voices, LeVine powerfully upends received notions about the Middle East by exploring one of the area’s least-known subcultures.

Interviewing and jamming with musicians from Morocco to Pakistanâ ”including rappers and trip-hop artists as well as metalheadsâ ”LeVine (Why They Don't Hate Us) presents Muslims, Christians and Jews who, in the face of corruption, repression and violence, use their music to speak truth to power and carve out a space for individual expression and a new form of community. The degree of independence the musicians enjoy varies widelyâ ”from Israeli band Orphaned Land who are free of restrictions (and widely admired in the Arab metal world) to Egyptian metalheads who fear arrest and possible torture for sporting long hair. Each artist in this book struggles, on some level, for cultural and political reform, and LeVine argues that if these musicians could find a way to cooperate with progressive religious activists and the working class, they could trigger a revolution. This is a tall order, but the author's warm and intelligent examination of a reality few in the West have experienced suggests it may yet be possible. (July 15) Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High Schoolâ ”In the 1970s, heavy metal acts like Black Sabbath and Iron Maiden created dark, violent music that was as much political and social protest as it was adrenaline-laced sound energizing the mosh pit. LeVine looks at the current heavy metal, punk, and hip-hop scenes of the Middle East in this way, presenting the backgrounds of each and exploring the social import of their messages. With lyrics crying for political and social change, this music carries the screams of angry youth, but angry youth who, for the most part, still regard themselves as devout Muslims. Each chapter examines a different nation and its music scene. Although it's not surprising that the most active centers are the more Westernized nations like Morocco and Israel, the most fascinating sections are those that cover places like Iran, where the music is not just looked at with suspicion, but often considered illegal. Many of the musicians are in their late teens and early 20s. Unfortunately, LeVine does a poor job of describing the music itself, throwing out terms like "grindcore" and "black metal" without defining them. Readers already knowledgeable about different forms of heavy metal won't have a problem with this, but those coming from the outside might find all the undefined labels a little confusing. LeVine does, however, provide a useful list of Web sites that provide samples of the music; a companion audio CD is sold separately. It becomes obvious that the author sees these musicians as a force for positive change. Although a journalistic approach might make this work more convincing, it's still a fascinating read about a unique subculture.â ”Matthew L. Moffett, Pohick Regional Library, Burke, VA Copyright Â© Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Interesting book covering a topic that's not really covered, and that is the rock and rap subculture in predominately Muslim Middle East and North African (MENA) countries. The author speaks about six languages (including Arabic and Hebrew) so he gets around pretty well. One item he mentioned that I found interesting is that the Arabic spoken in Morocco is very different from the Arabic spoken in other parts of MENA, so much so that Arabic speakers in Syria (for example) couldn't understand the Arabic spoken in Morocco (and vice versa). Moroccan Arabic has a lot of Berber and other non-Arabic (such as French and Spanish) words embedded in the language. The author writes about his own personal experiences traveling in various MENA countries. He's particular to rock music because he's a rock guitarist himself, and has played with various bands located in the countries he writes about. His book is a sociology book about a subculture existing in MENA, and the social problems and tensions that he's observed (especially concerning rockers and rappers in those countries he visited). If you want to read about the rock and rap subculture in these countries, then this book is probably a pretty good book to read. He didn't really write much about the various terrorist organizations operating in MENA (organizations such as the Sunni terrorist organization Muslim Brotherhood which had ties to Nazi Germany back in the 1930s and 1940s and which has supported or spawned other terrorist groups such as Hamas, Al Queda, and ISIS). I have a feeling ISIS (for example) would probably have little (or no) tolerance for the rockers and rappers, Jews, and other people not following their radical Islamic philosophy (including the author) and would probably execute them if they caught them (beheading being a common execution method). If you want to read about the overall socio-economic problems and the history of MENA, then I'd recommend books by Bernard Lewis, or James Gelvin or Huston Smith (for detailed info on religions such as Islam, Judaism, Christianity, etc) or Lord Kinross (on Ottoman history), and others. The author of this book tends to have a liberal leftist (moving in the Cultural Marxist direction) slant to his writings, and his writings are not as balanced as other writers of MENA history and culture. But again, if you just want to read about the rock and rap subculture existing in MENA, then this book is a good book to read for that.

I purchased this book with the expressed intention and aspiration of learning about the Metal culture in the Muslim world. This book accomplished this task marvelously. The reason I could not allow myself to give this book any more than three stars is chapter five. This chapter is filled with glaring inaccuracies and is tainted by such a strong political bias that it reflects quite poorly on the author and his work. Chapter five deals with "Israel/Palestine." Indeed, this is a contentious issue in which it is difficult not to have personal feelings. But as a purported professor of Middle East history, the

author should have taken care to be accurate and not to pick sides. The author continuously endorses the Palestinian version of history while dismissing the Israeli version of history as merely "Zionist narrative." He is critical of Israeli rapper Kobi Shimoni to a fault. He accuses Shimoni of providing "a renewed and largely uncritical nationalist narrative" to Israeli youth. He then asserts that this narrative justifies "routine humiliation and violence that Palestinians suffer at the hands of the IDF." The author conveniently ignores the fact that this "routine" humiliation Palestinians endure stemmed from daily terrorists attacks that Israelis put up with from Palestinian terrorists after Arafat walked away from the promise of a Palestinian state in 2000. He also ignores the fact that Kobi Shimoni's music is not only pro-Israel, but pro peace with the Palestinians as well. He decides what music is "good" based on whether the band or artist playing it just so happens to agree with his politics. He accuses this "narrative" of having no basis in reality while failing to provide adequate historical context for his readers. When he does discuss history, it becomes apparent that he has no qualms about embracing Palestinian narrative. Below are some selected quotations from page 113 of this book that demonstrate the author's bias. -"Zionist colonization" What colonialism does he see in the Zionist movement? Jews escaping persecution in Europe and returning to their ancestral homeland does not amount to "colonialism" by the definition of the word. -"Establishment of a Jewish state on 78% of Palestine..." Palestine was partitioned by the British in 1921 to create the Kingdom of Jordan which formed 78% of Palestine at that time. If a Palestinian state is created in the future, a Jewish state (Israel) will exist in only 18% of Palestine and  $\frac{1}{3}$  of Palestinians worldwide live in Historic Palestine (Israel, Jordan, West Bank and Gaza). -"Palestinians forced into exile..." Not a single Palestinian would have become a refugee had the Palestinian leadership accepted the 1937, 1938 or 1947 partition plans instead of launching riots and wars aimed at getting rid of the Jewish community in Palestine and later Israel. This is not mentioned in the book. This author writes quite well about Islam and Metal. I can hardly imagine, however, how he became a professor of Middle East history. This is a good book. It would have been better had chapter five not been so political and one-sided.

This book was completely unreadable. After a little research on the author i can understand why as his views on islam and the west are certainly in the minority. As for rock and roll and islam maybe theres some thing some where in the book someone will like but i couldnt get thru 30 pages of it after 2 weeks. Save your monoey and buy sci-fi or maybe westerns but not this

I have not read the book, but just watched a national TV show with Mark LeVine speaking as an

apologist for HAMAS at UCSD. The really weird thing is that his book -- the same shown here -- was promoted on the show and the dust jacket of the book was shown on the screen. But the man on that TV show, as Mark LeVine, is most definitely NOT the same man pictured here on as Mark LeVine. What gives?!!

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