



Heavy Metal Islam: Rock, Resistance, and the Struggle for the Soul of Islam

Mark LeVine

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“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.

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