



# Van Halen: Exuberant California, Zen Rock'n'roll (Reverb)

*John Scanlan*

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'I hate the word maturing,' singer David Lee Roth once said. 'I don't like the word evolving – or any of that bullshit. The point is to keep it as simplistic, as unassuming, and as stupid as possible.' In keeping with Roth's sentiment, *Van Halen: Exuberant California, Zen Rock'n'roll* follows the band's pursuit of the art of artlessness, and describes how they characterize what historian Kevin Starr terms 'Zen California' – a state of mind and way of being that above all celebrates 'the now'. In rock'n'roll terms it stands for the unregulated expenditure of energy; for a youthful exuberance that seems destined to extinguish itself. While many have attempted to discover the secrets of Van Halen through an analysis of their musical role models, John Scanlan looks instead at deeper aesthetic and philosophical influences, such as romanticism and the Beat movement. Through illuminating moments and impressions – decaying Hollywood in the 1970s; Ted Templeman and Sunset Sound Studios; Top Jimmy and the Zero Zero club; the building of Eddie Van Halen's Hollywood Hills studio in 1983 – the author shows how 1970s California was the only time and place that Van Halen could have emerged. Along the way, Scanlan explores other aspects of the band, such as the relationship between David Lee Roth and Eddie Van Halen; the unique climate of Southern California, and its relation to a sense of cultural exuberance; the echoes of Beat aesthetics in David Lee Roth's attitude to time and the moment; Eddie Van Halen's 'bebop' sensibility; and the real roots of the so-called 'Brown' sound. *Van Halen* is a groundbreaking account of an extraordinary band, caught in the events of a revolutionary time. The book will appeal to all fans of the group, as well as readers with an interest in the history and aesthetics of rock'n'roll, or the culture of California.

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