



Warren Zevon: Desperado of Los Angeles (Tempo: A Rowman & Littlefield Music Series on Rock, Pop, and Culture)

George Plasketes

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Warren Zevon was one of the most original songwriters to emerge from the prolific 1970s Los Angeles music scene. Beyond his most familiar song—the rollicking 1978 hit “Werewolves of London”—Zevon’s smart, often satirical songbook is rich with cinematic, literary, and comic qualities; dark narratives; complex characters; popular culture references; and tender, romantic ballads of parting and longing.

Warren Zevon: Desperado of Los Angeles is the first book-length, critical exploration of one of popular music’s most talented and tormented antiheroes. George Plasketes provides a comprehensive chronicle of Zevon’s 40-year, 20-record career and his enduring cultural significance. Beginning with Zevon’s classical training and encounters as a youth with composers Robert Craft and Igor Stravinsky, Plasketes surveys Zevon’s initiation into the 1960s through the Everly Brothers, the Turtles, and the film *Midnight Cowboy*. Plasketes then follows Zevon from his debut album with Asylum Records in 1976, produced by mentor Jackson Browne, through his successes and struggles from a Top Ten album to record label limbo during the 1980s, through a variety of music projects in the 1990s, including soundtracks and scores, culminating with a striking trio of albums in the early 2000s. Despite his reckless lifestyle and personal demons, Zevon made friends and alliances with talk show host David Letterman and such literary figures as Hunter S. Thompson and Carl Hiaasen. It was only after his death in 2003 that Zevon received Grammy recognition for his work.

Throughout this book, Plasketes explores the musical, cinematic, and literary influences that shaped Zevon’s distinctive style and songwriting themes and continue to make Zevon’s work a telling portrait of Los Angeles and American culture.

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