

Mp3 Shakerleg - Handmade

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Recorded live in the subways of NYC. Shakerleg is the most intense subway performer we've ever seen or heard. Mixing improvisational hip/hop rhythms with aggressive, wildstyle, stick-free, bare-knuckle drumming. NO OVERDUBS OF ANY KIND. 13 MP3 Songs WORLD: World Beat, JAZZ: Weird Jazz

Details: Shakerleg - Handmade cd review by Perestroika Some of New York City's best music is not found in large concert halls or arenas. Some of it can't even be found in dive bars or hip Williamsburg lofts. Yes, to find some of the city's best underground music you have to go, well, underground. Some of my earliest memories of New York City have got to do with subway performers. From dancers and acrobats to instrumentalists and vocalists, a wide array of performance artists can be found on the platforms of our city's subway system. Some performers are better than others and some are downright awful but all subway performances seem to carry a certain gritty realism with them. The first time I ever encountered Shakerleg was probably about three years ago, while on my way to Brooklyn before I lived there. He sat behind his drum set on the L train platform in Union Square with a semicircle of amazed commuters around him. Shakerleg is one of the most passionate and energetic performers I've ever seen in a public place. He lays it all out on the line in a one man performance for an audience who has no real reason to care or even turn to look, but they do. Just the sight of Shakerleg is something to be seen. He's a muscular baldheaded guy who could easily pass as Vin Diesel's stunt double. He sits on a stool behind his bizarre custom welded drum set with an African djembe held between his knees. He leans the djembe back and forth as he hits it moving it closer and further from the snare drum that's welded to the kit in front of him. When the djembe is near the snare drum it sounds like a high pitched snare hit and when he leans it back, away from the snare, the djembe sounds like a low bass drum. The whole time Shakerleg plays he keeps time with the ten or fifteen egg shakers that he has tied around his left ankle that give him his name. On his welded rig he's got a wood block and a tambourine as well as a few cymbals and a closed hi-hat. One of the most amazing things to see during a Shakerleg performance is the way he hits the 4 or 5 cymbals he has surrounding him with the backs of his hands while on the bounce back from hitting the djembe. This is undoubtedly painful considering the speed and intensity at which he plays them. As big of

a fan I was of his subway act, I was a bit skeptical when my brother came home one day with Shakerleg's cd, which he sells on the subway platforms where he performs. I wasn't sure if the audio recording alone would really convey the same emotion that his live performance does with the benefit of watching him play in his innovative style on such a strange drum kit. The cd starts off with a track called "Tape On" which is the sound of Shakerleg putting tape on his fingers. He goes slowly at first and then speeds up making the tape unraveling and ripping sound rhythmic. The first really musical track is called "Straight" and lives up to the name by having a very straightforward consistent low drum sound driving it with lots of flourishes and riffs filling in the blanks. About halfway through the track there's a quiet breakdown and then it kicks back in with an infectious dance beat driven by the shakers. The innovation and variation in this track sets the tone for the rest of the album which somehow keeps the sound of just one man playing the drums stay interesting and extremely listenable through and through. I love the fact that seemingly almost every track was recorded live without overdubs right in the Union Square station where I first saw him. You can hear the echo of the empty subway and even the occasional oohs and ahhs of Shakerleg's captive audience. The only track that I don't think was recorded in Union Square is the most interesting one with the most interesting title. "Cell, chest, cassette, asprin, floor" sounds like Shakerleg got away from his crazy drum set and used his cellphone, a cassette, a bottle of asprin and whatever else was around to record a nice little rhythm track that, I think, serves as a well timed break from his usual sound in the middle of the album. All in all, I think the best way to experience Shakerleg is in person but I must admit, the album exceeded my expectations. To this self-released album I give an A- and to this underground musician who redefines what it means to be underground I give all the hope in the world and expect to see big things in the future-shakerleg.com

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