

An Interview With Shock G

Written by Westside ID196
Wednesday, 13 October 2004 10:23 -

Shock G is a legend; not only in rap and hip-hop, but his talents as a producer, musician, and a cartoonist are also part of this complex man.

Shock G dropped his first independent album "Fear of a Mixed Planet" Oct.12th.

A widely anticipated album "Fear of a Mixed Planet" has lived up to all the expectations.

Shock G is best known I guess for his fore front position with Digital Underground and being one of the people who helped bring Tupac Shakur up and get him in the "game.

Shock has worked with almost everybody, from Richie Rich to George Clinton to Prince.

His wide range of talent is present and in very good form on "Fear Of A Mixed Planet". Even the album insert art is great.

This is an all around great job and one I am sure Shock is proud of.

Pick it up and see what I'm talking about. You won't be disappointed.

Also visit www.ShockG.com to keep up on Shock. Check his site. It is 100% free and has many mp3 and other great stuff on it.

I had an opportunity to ask Shock G a few questions . I'd like to thank him for his time and Betsy Bolte Public Relations for hooking it all up. Thanks also to 33rd Street records.

Robert - Thanks for taking time for us, we appreciate it.

Shock G - Likewise, thanks for the opportunity to speak to the world. Website interviews mean a kid in Ethiopia could be reading this. That's big!

Robert - This album has been along time in coming. Are you relieved that it is finally out?

Shock G - True. Finally a chance to speak my heart & mind as greg jacobs, instead of only what I think "Humpty", "ShockG", or "Piano-Man" should say.

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They are more-less characters, personalities that I write for, ya feel me? I'm not as smooth as "ShockG", or as wild as "Humpty". They were just rappers that I myself wanted to see, emcees that I thought would be cool, so I portrayed them myself, to entertain myself as well as the masses. My regular personality, greg jacobson, is more personal & shy and needs way less attention than "they" do.

On the album "Fear of a Mixed Planet" Shockg is named as the artist, but I'm actually just being my regular self "Greg" on alot of the songs.

Robert - With the first track I knew that this was a different, "real" album. You threw Tupac out in a way that many don't comprehend these days. Thanks for that.

Shock G - Those who knew him behind the scenes saw a person who was always reading, studying, organizing, and plotting his next move, instead of only the wild person who we all saw publicly. Had we not pulled him on tour in 1990, he had plans to accept a seat as a chairman within a campus struggle organization that had invited him to Atlanta. Go here for my full story on that, select "Shakur Legacy".

Robert - Really this is a journey, not listening to a cd. I really never heard anything like this. Is that what you were trying to get across with this project? Trying to grab people's minds instead of just beats and floss?

Shock G - Quiet as it's kept, that's what I tried to do with every CD I ever worked on but I guess this one just came through more than the others.

Robert - There are many of Digital Undergrounds crew on this album, but it seems the "direction" is different than the Digital Underground norm. How is the feedback on the album been?

Shock G - So far, every single company that hears it wants to distribute it or get involved in some way. Our agent, Bobby Bessone outta nashville, said I should've waited and heard what Sony & Universal had to say, but we're happy with the independant decision that we made, 33rd Street Records. They understand the positive, alternative, enlightened path & message we're trying to spread. A broader scope than lyrically limiting yourself to just guns, diamonds & slick street slang only. I see too many shorties immitating us and getting caught up in the pen before they really knew what they were clakkin about, and then waking up to reality at 27 with 4 more years to go and their futures all fucked up.

Robert - It has been said that you saw this album as a project for total creative freedom. Is that something that wasn't present on the Digital Underground albums?

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Shock G - digital underground had an invisible fence at the borders of "what people expect from us" and "what we're known for" that subliminally kept us all from accepting anything outside that fence. Yes, on this album I made a run for it and successfully scaled that fence without getting popped by any of the guards.

But it wasn't easy.

Robert - How is it different on a solo album for you, being as it all rests on your shoulders, instead of a "group" effort?

Shock G - It actually felt the opposite of what you just said. At the digital underground sessions, the weight of everyone involved & represented by the group was on my shoulders. "Naw we shouldn't say that shock", or "you sure you wanna put that on the album? ..I thought d.u. was known for this, people want this from us."

..and so forth.

But on this solo joint, I only answered to the Great One Spirit or the Higher Consciousness of the Universe (god or whatever you believe in) morally and for final editing and so forth; rather than remain prisoner to music industry codes, d.u. standards, and mere human laws & morals. I had to face my own conscience instead of the consciences of the entire group for a change, which I believe allowed more infinite focus and less getting stuck with narrow short-visioned human trends, laws, or society induced limitations.

Robert - "Holmedown Up," (which features Yukmouth, Java & 5th Element, and Clev MC). That beat is tight as hell. Is that one of your beats?

Shock G - Yes. An alternative version of that same beat exists on Cypha 7s "Give it Here".

Cypha 7 is a group from LA featuring Akim & Shaheed who I met up at Project Blow last year. They opened up for Aceyalone & Abstract Rude one night and blew the roof off dat bitch. I been workin wit them cats ever since, and they blessed the stage wit us at our last sold out performance at Johnny Depps Viper Room on sunset blvd in West Hollywood last July. It was advertised as "ShockG with special guests" and it sold out the week it went in the paper, a month before the show. Needless to say, I was both suprized and proud of that. And thanx Cypha 7, yall ripped it up that night. They busted some of their original material while I held them down on live keys & drum machine.

Robert - Who is responsible for all the beats on this album, are they mostly yours?

Shock - I did "Keep it Beautiful", "Cinnamon Waves", and "Holmedown Up" but "Cherry Flava"d Email", my favorite beat on the album was done by Marc

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Rosenberg a Jewish dude and cousin of Leila Stienberg who really discovered Tupac and who produced the "Thug Angel/Life of an Outlaw" DVD. Cherry Flava'd Email is so heated it's hard to let our socially trained & racially brainwashed minds believe that a jewish cat produced it!

"My Opinion" was produced by my former piano student Chris Clay who studied piano under me in the mid-nineties when he was a teenager. He also studied jazz piano under Randy Myers in Oakland, which can also be heard in his style.

Robert - The track "My Opinion" with Numskull of the Luniz is surely to cause a lot of controversy. There seems to be a mix of "fun" tracks and some rather serious ones. What would you say the over all message of the album is?

Shock G - Think before you act. Remember that music can be all-over the place, style-wise as well as topically. Don't get stuck doin the same style & subjects as everyone else, make it interesting. The world is yours to pull from, so why limit your focus? I try to apply this to life as well.

Robert - You have a lot of great people on the album. Is there anyone ya wanted but just couldn't get together with in time?

Shock G - Yeah, I wish Fionna Apple coulda" dropped some piano (live or programmed) on it somewhere. And I really wanted the Horny Horns (Fred Wesley & Maceo Parker) on some stuff but oh well, at least we found Walter Davis, he's brilliant as well. Couldn't find D"Angelo to sing some stuff so we used a D"Angelo sound-alike in a coupla" places (hee hee). But we did find Q-Bert and OH MY GOD did he bless Cinnamon Waves with his magical scratches.

Robert - The sound of the album is really a combination of all genres rolled neatly into one. How would you classify the sound? Can you put it in a category?

Shock G - Hmm, I don't know "Trippier Hop"? "Dumb & Bass"? Ha ha. or how bout.. "Gumbo-Hop" or just "Gumbop" (like gumbo, we threw it all in there!)

It's the new & shockadelically improved Caramel Milk Shocklet SHOCKWAVES!! And fo da" hoes.. the new Protien Shocklet Squirtshake!! AHH HA HA HA!!

I don't know, it's just music.
(..or moo-sick, depending on who ya ask!)

Robert - Are there going to be any singles released from the album?

Shock G - I think "Let's Go" has been selected to be first.

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Robert - Can we expect any video's to be made off any of the tracks?

Shock G - Yes, each single and then some. I heard cats been doin DVDs wit vidys to every song on the album. I would like ta try something like that, or at least offer alittle more than just vidys for television. Any directors out there that are diggin the album and have a treatment in mind please hit us up. Bring your reel (or whatever you got) to the next show and you can find us by checking the "What's Up" page @shockg.com".
"Let's Go" we're ready.

Robert - I know the art work is as amazing as the album. The insert is really a good job. I totally got into it. Who all helped hook that up?

Shock G - My friend Shawn @deja vu design helped me with the format & layout, and I guess I drew the little cartoons n stuff. It's stuff that I been doodlin on planes & in airports over the last coupla years and then took it, cleaned it up and used it for the CD. The "G-3000 Sound & Image Creator" was created on a flight home from Spring Break in Corpus Cristi Texas with digital underground & Element. Looking down out the window of the plane I saw so much traffic, smoke, farming, industrialization, and suburban sprawl connecting every city together I remember thinking "damn, we're running out of earth!", and I sketched my dream instrument "the G-3000" so I could re-design the world a better place with room for everybody.

Robert - Besides the album you have been doing a lot of shows and dropping a few tracks over at Mob Life Records. You did "Hurry Up Run" for their "On The Grind" Mix tape. Do you plan or have you did any other drops with them?

Shock G - I last saw Eli of Moblife at a 2Pac birthday/Mutulu Shakur benefit concert in Manhatten that was put on by Mopreme Shakur & inwhich we performed with Dead Prez and some of Thug Life. He gave me that mix CD and told me he wants to get me on the next one Jah willing.
So we'll see, I hope so.

Robert - Are you going to be on Mopreme Shakur's upcoming album over there?

Shock G - I hope so. Mo's been doing shows with me & Slapbak, the eightpiece live-band I've been collaborating with this year for the live shows. If he needs me, I'm there. And thanx fo" pullin me in to the Wakeup Show in LA that day Mo!

Robert - How did you get all these dudes to commit to the album? Did ya just

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put a call out or did a lot of them shout out that they wanted to do it?

Shock G - A little of both. And I got all the writers info divied-up & filed with our accountants, so everyone who contributed let's keep our fingers crossed for good sales and usages; there will be checks for everyone.

Robert - Do you find that dropping collaborations is easier for you , with your show schedule than doing full blown album projects?

Shock - Yes, and thanx for asking that, you just helped me understand it. To stay home and put everything else on hold while focusing on one album requires not just a budget but a budget that can keep us all afloat during the process. Otherwise I gotta continue to squeeze in a song here, a song there, while we keep our large network of artists & entertainers afloat. That's why it took over 3 years for me to write, record, mix, and package my own solo album, because it was subject to the same process.

Robert - When will we see "Lost Files" available again?

Shock G - Lost Files can be downloaded for free right now from the MP3 page @shockg.com. We don't charge for that one cause it's mostly just out-takes & experiments that didn't make the albums.

Robert - The new Digital album I have been told will be " D-Flow Project". When is it expected to drop?

Shock G - We switched the artist name from "D-Flow Project" to simply "ShockG" but it still features most of the crew and will hit stores nationwide October 12th as "Fear of a Mixed Planet". Another "D-Flow" album is the soundtrack to "Sex and the Studio/Volume 2" which will hit stores by Christmas.

Robert - With the heavy show schedule you have, how do you find time for all the rest? I mean this album is not just a fast drop, you can tell that by just one listen.

Shock G - I'd been writing this album in my spare time since may 2000, the year & month I walked away from ecstasy. I had a bad drug scare that year and documented it in the song "Baby You Okay?". It was the first lyric written towards this album. But I didn't began actually recording the album "till fall 2002 and didn't finally call it finished till this last spring, when I began getting the art ready during the Def Jux tour. (...inbetween

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digital tours I went out with Murs as his music conductor from march to may 2004, states & canada.)

So as you see, there wasn't much rest, BUT I did refuse to let it be rushed and there was no label or management rushing me on this one either. So for those cooperate heads who feel it turned out better than any previous work, perhaps the lesson is; if you want good product, you can't rush the artist. (..unless it's a 2Pac type which is definitely not me. I wish I could work that fast, but it don't work that way for me. Not only am I in my forties, I'm also a virgo and virgos strive for perfection and will tinker away at a project for damn near fuckin ever.)

It was a free day here, a free half-a-week there. Anytime it finally slowed down to no tour, no travel, no outside studio session, no family visit, "YES! ..my chance to finish that one song with Yuk", or whatever it was. But yes, I refused to let it be rushed, and didn't care when I finished it, I just wanted it to sound right.

Thanks for recognizing that in one listen.

Robert - Have you been asked to produce any tracks on the upcoming Tupac album?

Shock G - No but even better, they asked Deon Evans (formally Big-D the Impossible from Pacs" Underground Railroad) to do a gang of tracks for it and God knows my dog needed that work right now to help with his family & medical bills. He just got a liver transplant and his body is accepting it, Jah blessed!! Luv you D!

Robert - Well with this drop over and out, what is next for Shock G?

Shock G - An eightpiece live band made up of me on keys & others playing all the stuff I ever produced, alive & accurately. So if you got songs wit us and/or just wanna rime over some d.u. production, come "get up in the show, & help us get it crunk son!"

Robert - Well "Fear Of A Mixed Planet" is truly a fresh concept and something that I hope you have a lot of luck with.

Shock G - Thanx sir.

Robert - Are there any shout outs or things I missed that need to be said?

Shock G - Young people DOOWUTCHYALIKE! As in follow your heart and what you

