

SHONLOCK

NEVERODDOREVEN

The road to Shonlock's solo artistry and national debut long player *NEVERODDOREVEN* (Arrow/Universal) was paved with a wide array of unconventional behind-the-scenes experiences supplementing the music industry's heaviest hitters. Plucked out of his Chicagoland high school by R. Kelly's management team based on his ultra slick dance steps, the eventual MC/singer/songwriter/producer joined R&B powerhouse Aaliyah and hip-hop pioneers Arrested Development on tour as a choreographer and dancer. From there, his name spread throughout the industry like lightning, inspiring a call from fellow Grammy-nominated revolutionaries Grits, which didn't just open a slew of additional career doors but also led to an entirely new perspective on life in general.

"At first, I was using a lot of my gifts and talents for the wrong reasons, but I came to a whole new outlook on life after I met Verbs, who was supporting Grits at the time," recalls Shonlock. "One day I was teaching him choreography, and he presented the Gospel to me, which was really refreshing because it was coming from somebody who understood my background and had similar interests in music. I had been going to church when I was younger but had never really grasped it, so to have it presented in a form that I could relate to and at an age when I could understand it was life changing."

Alongside that spiritual renewal came a chance to work with like-minded stars such as Nicole C. Mullen and The Katinas, eventually catching the eyes and ears of multi-platinum DC Talk singer turned solo star TobyMac. Besides offering his choreography to Mac's Diverse City Band, Shonlock also became a guest vocalist/performer, who still holds that position today.

"He's definitely a forerunner because he's always dared to try different things and push the envelope," observes Shonlock of the noted influence on his solo career. "I started off emceeing, beatboxing and breakin', but I can also sing and am really into rock music and electric guitars. Seeing all that Toby's done, it makes me think, 'why can't I make a song with beatboxing over an acoustic guitar?'"

During his time on tour with the aforementioned legend, Shonlock demonstrated those skills on endless occasions, most tangibly, on a self-released CD that moved over 15,000 copies across the country, straight out of his suitcase. Add in songwriting credits on multiple Mac projects, plus cuts by Mandisa, Verbs and Kierra "Kiki" Sheard (to name a few), and the foundation was certainly set for this pop/rock/hip-hop hybrid to catch the attention of Arrow/Universal. The resulting partnership first spawned the *Where Never Begins* EP in late 2010, followed by the full-length *NEVERODDOREVEN*.

Throughout the thirteen track collection, influences as varied as Mac and the Diverse City Band to Outkast, Mat Kearney, The Script, and B.o.B. permeate Shonlock's boundary-breaking sound, all uniting with a crystal clear cohesion. And just as creative as the musical content is the lyrical dichotomy, which starts with the ultra-eye catching title.

“There’s a play on the title visually, where it spells the same phrase forward or backwards,” verifies Shonlock. “The message is all about my relationship with God, and walking with Him. I never find it odd when amazing things happen. But on the flipside, with the ultimate sacrifice of His son, I could never get even, which makes me forever indebted to Him.”

That thought-provoking but continuously relatable premise pops up on the lead single “Something In Your Eyes,” which has already topped the charts and led Shonlock to artist-centered recognition that supplements his already decorated supporting credits. The track is an instantaneous anthem of hope that reminds fans from all walks of life that God is always around, even through life’s mundane moments and the roadblocks that inevitably pop up in everyone’s path.

“Cheers” takes an even more personal twist on Shonlock’s rock-infused soul, chronicling an upbringing in the shadow of a parent who struggled with alcohol abuse, followed by his own dabblings that were eventually curbed and resulted in a full household restoration. “Scarred” traces a relationship between a guy and a girl that went south after the consequences from poor decisions were exposed. “Hello” is a redemptive call to action to turn a fractured life around, while “Monsta” serves as a metaphor for believers, encouraging them to unite and combat worldly pressures.

Coincidentally, that latter track also shares the namesake of the multi-talent’s backing band, which has already joined him as an opening act on TobyMac and Skillet’s record-breaking 2010 *Awake Tonight* tour, followed by 2011’s outing alongside Group 1 Crew. “I moved from Chicago to Atlanta, where my wife is from, and joined the church where her father is the pastor, which is also where I met the guys in the band,” explains Shonlock. “The goal was to have everyone making the most of their gifts, talents, and creativity to put together some really crazy live performance-type stuff, from the songs themselves to choreography to having two drummers playing the same kit together at the same time. I’m excited about people seeing the stuff we’re cooking up because it’s not something you’ve seen before.”

Clearly, the pursuit of excellence, coupled with a desire to bridge all audiences while breaking down radio formats and spiritual stereotypes, is the fuel behind Shonlock’s trailblazing fire. And with his ambitious amalgamation of genres over street-savvy reflections, he’s sure to captivate current fans while commanding the attention of newcomers.

“My goal is to be a blend for the pop, hip-hop and rock-loving crowd without ever wanting to get boxed into a certain category,” assures Shonlock. “I’m not eyeing a particular marketplace, group or clique. I’m just going to do whatever I can to make sure the people that need to hear this message get a chance. If there’s a good message and quality music, gifts and talents will rise to the top, and people will recognize it no matter what the style or the subject of the songs.”

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