

Mp3 Mike Rickard - Stirred Not Shaken



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A collection of melodic pop-rock songs brought together by an eclectic host of influences, a voice that can go from wail to whisper, and honest, personal lyrics that will move you. 11 MP3 Songs POP: Today's Top 40, ROCK: Acoustic Details: Honest. Personal. Humorous. These are just some of the words that describe the debut independent release, *Stirred Not Shaken*, by singer-songwriter Mike Rickard. The 11 songs on *Stirred Not Shaken* "cover a myriad of feelings and topics: everything from fear, loss, loneliness, my family, disillusionment with religion - to ultimately finding happiness, love and being thankful for who I am and what gives my life meaning. "I am a feeling sensitive person and I first began writing as a way to deal with my feelings. I think that sensitivity shows in my writing. But I can be totally irreverent and absolutely could not live without humor. I've always felt that I'm a little left of center; that I don't quite fit. And you know what? I'm fine with that." All of these sides are well represented on *Stirred Not Shaken*. Indeed, the album title comes from the irreverent, unapologetic line, "So here's to all the therapy I guess I should have taken/If I had to sum it up, I've been stirred, but I'm not shaken" - taken from the gospel rock song "Who I Am". Music was an essential part of Mike's life. He began singing in church and college before touring parts of the world with the Continental Singers, and subsequently recording and touring with two other contemporary Christian vocal groups. But a move to Atlanta brought about several years of musical silence while Mike focused on his career, experiencing life in a new "big city", as well as time spent in some deep soul-searching. "All of my life, I sang other people's music, other people's thoughts. But I ended up questioning everything I believed, everything that I had ever sung about. So I thought that music was over for me. But the last several years brought about the right mix of experiences and feelings that make up the songs on the record. I realized that I definitely had something to say and wanted to say it in my own way." Although *Stirred Not Shaken* is a pop album with plenty of hooks, Mike's eclectic

musical influences (ranging from Duncan Sheik, John Mayer, Jason Mraz, and George Michael to Madonna, Sade and Sarah McLachlan, just to name a few) come together to create a unique, yet cohesive record. It's all brought together by a "true singer's" voice that can go from wail to whisper, sometimes in the same song. But when asked about a song's most important element, Mike says, "I always start with the lyrics - what it is I want to say. Everyone writes songs differently; but for me, the story tells me how the song should sound. The sound serves the story." *Stirred Not Shaken* takes the listener on a musical and emotional journey, starting with the upbeat "Lucky," a song that combines electronica elements with acoustic guitars. The light, jazzy sound of "Do You Know?" provides a contrast to sad but hopeful lyrics about an absent father - "It's funny and it's sad/Sometimes I miss what I never had in a different long ago/It's strange but it's me to still believe in what could be/So I thought that you should know." On the country-tinged "Forgot to Forget," Mike poignantly sings, "I saw that old movie on the late, late show last night/The one that used to make me laugh because it made you cry." "Forgot to Forget" received a semifinalist award in the 2003 All Genres Songwriting competition, sponsored by the Georgia Music Industry Association (GMIA). Mike penned the song "Natural" months before the issue of gay marriage began to dominate the evening news. It was written as a personal statement about what has now become a very political issue. The song is best summarized by the lines, "If the heart is made to love, to reach beyond itself/When it comes to giving mine, how could I give it to anyone else?" Mike says, "I wanted to write a response to those who try to legislate morality, who try to steal basic human rights on the basis of what boils down to religious beliefs and intolerance. But I didn't want to do an "us vs. them" song, nor did I want it to appear overtly political. So I put dance beats around some personal lyrics and threw in a punch line at the end of the song. Love comes in different shapes, sizes, colors and orientations and I look forward to the day when we can respect each other for who we are without religious or political filters. I think the title of the song says it all." Other highlights include the beat-driven "Everything You Need" and the laid back intensity of "Forever Ran Out of Time." On the closing track, "As If To Say," Mike takes a look forward and sings about what he would ultimately like to be remembered for: a continuous search for knowledge and truth while treating others with love, compassion and dignity. The team of Smith Huston shared production duties. Jan Smith (vocal coach for Usher, Rob Thomas, and many of today's other top artists) did all of the vocal production, while Huston Singletary (Whitney Houston, Monica) handled production of all the instrumental tracks, although both of them were intimately

involved with all aspects of the project from start to finish. Of the duo, Mike says, "They're a great team. Huston took my original songs and gave them life; he helped steer them in a direction beyond what I conceived, while keeping to what I was trying to do. Jan also provided input on the sound and direction of the songs. She also pulled out some vocal performances that I'm very proud of; she got me to do some things I didn't initially have the confidence to do. The end result is that when I listen to my record, I don't think, 'Wow, that sounds like John Mayer,' or any of the other people I look up to. It sounds like Mike Rickard - and I think that's a great thing." Experience the sound. Live the life. Stirred Not Shaken.

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