



DIRECTED BY LEILAH WEINRAUB

SHAKEDOWN

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SYNOPSIS

SHAKEDOWN is the story of Los Angeles' black lesbian strip club scene and its genesis. Owned and operated by women, underground and illegal in nature, the club Shakedown is the darker, faster, younger iteration of this dance culture. The film is a window into this world. Shakedown emerged from a post-RIOTS, post-OJ, post-integration but still very racially divided Los Angeles. In this divided city Shakedown is an independent, all black and all female cash economy.

SHAKEDOWN chronicles the explicit performances and personal relationships of the party's dancers and organizers including Ronnie-Ron, Shakedown Productions' creator and emcee; Mahogany, the legendary "mother" of the scene; Egypt, their star performer; and Jazmyne, the "Queen" of Shakedown.

We're outside the club, on a non-descript Los Angeles street at night. The bass of the music inside slowly spills out as the guard checks I.D.s and credentials. Inside, the girls are getting ready, cracking jokes. The scene in the club is very intimate and sensual. The camera tightly pans across to Ronnie Ron doing what she does best; making the audience feel at ease. She's warming them up and us, the viewers. "Can yall show some love? Ya still tippin? If you are.. lemme know!" We jump to a scene of Egypt in the center of the dance floor. She's fine, she's frightening, she is in charge. Patrons shower her in dollars. They love her.

SHAKEDOWN, a story that unfolds like a legend.



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DIRECTORS STATEMENT

"What I liked about Shakedown was that the way people related to gender performance was consistently random. It was something people were inventing variations on all the time, and it was absolutely talked about but it was laid back.

I wanted to show the explicit nature of the performances, but my biggest fear with this film was exploitation. I feared that it would become a piece of content where people could watch it and be like, "Oh yeah, black lesbians, I know about that, thank you." You keep masticating one subculture after another, and every time you do it you keep in mind that there is something called "mainstream culture". But I think mainstream culture is a fabrication. Mainstream culture, what is that? Is it Beyonce, is it the news, is it war? What do we all participate in together? These little moments that everyone knows happens. Otherwise we all live in a subculture, we all live "sub-culture".

This whole world of women being gay is really undiscovered. It's not gonna take the same road as gay guys. Women are so many things. Shakedown was consistently inconsistent - everybody's different in a lot of different ways. When the characters talk about being bisexual or whatever, at the end you're not any more clear on what she's talking about than at the beginning because that's not the point. You have to just be OK with things being hard to understand.



I started this project at the end of 2002, so 16 years ago. I tried to interview everyone that I thought was connected in a world, so I interviewed the DJ, the costume maker, the bouncers, the girls that pick up money, the girlfriends, the main dancers, people that are also there but not the stars... I felt that maybe it was important just to record all these different people and see what their experience is. The film's story is really from 2002 to 2005, with Egypt as a narrator speaking from the point of view. Egypt wanted to be a central figure. She's a legend.

Shakedown is Los Angeles at a very special time, when the identity of the city is morphing. It's 10 years after the riots, it's post riots, post OJ, it's a re-segregated Los Angeles. Everyone went back to the neighborhoods they came from and stayed there. So that's where *Shakedown* emerges, it's all black, it's not like "I want to get out of here"; it's hood rich. Many other films keep affirming this story that wherever you're at and black is wrong, and that you have to get out of there to these other places. But what is that other place? I am personally hurt by these phoenix stories, these "gotta get out of here" stories. I'm offended by these aspirational stories constantly being shoved down our throats.





The structure of the film was a way to talk about labor. When you talk to people about work it's what they're doing with the majority of their days, so it's this space where you get to talk about every other part of their lives. We could say, 'Dancing for women is better than dancing for men'. And you can be like, sure! Everyone can imagine what that feels like, but the duty of the film was really to show what that feels like. It doesn't happen in the moments where people are talking. It's in the explicit sex moments where you see how people treat each other and you're like, "Oh, you can have an explicit sexual moment in public like that, I didn't know!"

But I see the characters in the movie as stars more than subjects. Documentary filmmakers feel really nervous about using the word stars, but I feel like there's this position in between journalistic integrity and this other thing. There's music, it's a movie, there's an original score made for it... at that point you depart from journalism. You are making people actors in a story.

The one thing that I did know was that ending the film is artificial. Their lives go on, my life goes on, people continue to work, Los Angeles exists, the idea of the space evolves – the only thing that

ends in a final way like death is the film. I have a writer credit because I thought it was important to say that this story is mine: it's not the definitive history of the genesis of black lesbian clubs in Los Angeles. This is my story and my interpretation. For there to be some accurate understanding of what really happened, 20 more people need to make something about this."

STARRING

THE SHAKEDOWN ANGLES IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE

EGYPT
JAZMYNE
HARMONY
BLAZE
I-DALLAS
MOCHA
MS. OOHZEE
SLIM-GOODIE
PIOZON
JAMAICA
JO-JO
SINNAMON
CAPPICHINO
SLOW-WINE
JAZZYBELLE
TRINITEE
360
FOXY
MISS MAHOGANY
JUNIOR
X
SUAVE
TRESURE
NITA
TIGHT-EYEZ
T
BIG T
TINA HOWIE T

OWNERS

CEO: SHA'RON HARRIS AKA "RONNIE RON"

VP: TERESA AKA "MS. TERESA"

FEATURING : MISS MAHOGANY



DIRECTORS BIO

Leilah Weinraub (b. 1979 Los Angeles) is an artist and director living in New York. A short version of her film SHAKEDOWN was recently included in the 2017 Whitney Biennial. She is the CEO and Creative Director of Hood By Air, the New York-based fashion collective known for luxury ready-to-wear. Weinraub helped to radicalize fashion by championing what she calls "modern people": the rising class of consumers who subvert traditional markers of race, class, and gender and revel in freedom, lawlessness, and spectacle. As a filmmaker, Weinraub has helped document such unacknowledged tastemakers, particularly those belonging to queer, autonomous communities of color whose creative output is often plundered by mass culture but whose stories are rarely told on their own terms.

SELECT PRESS

New Yorker

<https://www.newyorker.com/culture/culture-desk/leilah-weinraubs-radical-cinema-of-privacy-in-shakedown>

DAZED & CONFUSED

<http://www.dazeddigital.com/film-tv/article/39398/1/the-shakedown-documentary-la-by-leilah-weinraub-hood-by-air>

W Magazine

<https://www.wmagazine.com/story/leilah-weinraub-hood-by-air-ceo-film-w-hitney-biennial-interview>

PREMIERES



MoMA PS1



www.shakedown.film

<https://www.facebook.com/shakedownthemovie>

www.shakedown.film

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