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CD RELEASE

A Shining New Album From Bronze Radio Return



Hartford's Bronze Radio Return comes into its own on its second LP, "Shake! Shake! Shake!" (Brad Mahler / September 1, 2010)

Eric R. Danton



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Hartford Band Puts It All Together With 'Shake! Shake! Shake!'

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SOUNDCHECK: Music News & Views
1:03 p.m. EST, January 31, 2011

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ARTFORD

H — Surveying the crowd packed into the upstairs room at Up or On the Rocks Friday in Hartford, Bronze Radio Return singer **Chris Henderson** posed a question from the stage: "Who would have thought a local Hartford band could bring out so many people?"

Rhetorical or not, his question has an answer: No one would have thought it, but Bronze Radio Return has certainly earned it.

Starting with a dodgy self-titled debut EP in 2008, the band progressed to a halfway-there album with last year's "Old Time Speaker" and has returned fully formed on its latest, the excellent "Shake! Shake! Shake!"

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It's a self-released collection of robust rock songs, full of ringing guitars, keyboard textures and strong melodic hooks, marked here and there by touches from banjo and jumbles of clattering percussion.

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"I think the difference we're hearing is us refining our process," Henderson says in an interview a few days before Friday's show, a CD-release party to celebrate "Shake! Shake! Shake!" "We're getting to know ourselves musically."

The difference was evident onstage, where the band played a mix of old songs and new. The musicians tackled the 90-minute set with obvious enthusiasm, but the new songs stood out, crackling with particular energy.

Playing together over the past 3 1/2 years has helped Bronze Radio Return get to know itself, of course. So have producer Chad Copelin and the band's growing willingness to take its time.

"We had 10 days to record 'Old Time Speaker' in Nashville, a place we'd never been, with a producer we'd never met, playing songs we'd never played before," says Henderson, 26, a Maine native and 2006 graduate of the Hartt School. "Shake! Shake! Shake! we did in Oklahoma with the same producer, who we now have a very strong relationship with and the people he works with, in a studio that he owns — it's all his gear and his friends' gear. And we gave ourselves just about a month."

Henderson writes the basic songs, and the other musicians — guitarists Patrick Fetkowitz and Craig Struble, drummer Rob Griffith, bassist Bob Tanen and keyboardist Matt Warner — flesh out the arrangements.

"Often times, I'll just come in with an idea, lyrics or a melody or a progression, and it's really the rest of the band that makes the tune what it is," Henderson says. "I feel fortunate as a songwriter to be surrounded by people who know what they're doing. There's constant input from people; everyone has ideas."

Bronze Radio Return isn't yet a full-time vocation — Henderson teaches guitar lessons, and the others hold down various jobs — but the musician are getting close.





"Everybody is in this to win this, to bring it to the next step, the next level," Henderson says. "We're not looking to tour with U2 or the Rolling Stones, though that would be awesome, but we're looking to be full-time musicians who tour nationally."

National aspirations haven't overshadowed the band's local origins, though. Bronze Radio Return is proud to hail from Hartford, which the group makes clear in "Rough Town," a song on the new album.

"That tune kind of came from telling people when I go home, or when we leave, that you're from Hartford, and they say, 'I hear that's a rough town,'" Henderson says. The song "touches on a general conversation you have with someone and saying, 'Yeah, it is a rough town. Bad things happen here. But it's my rough town, and I have a lot of memories, and I'm choosing to focus on those, not murders in the North End.'"

There was no mistaking the band's fondness for its hometown at Up or On the Rocks — or the hometown's fondness for Bronze Radio Return. The band and the audience spurred each other on throughout the show, prompting Henderson to say approvingly midway through, almost as if to himself, "Hell of a crowd in here tonight."

"Shake! Shake! Shake" comes out March 29. Pre-order the CD starting Tuesday from the band's website, <http://www.bronzeradioreturn.com>, and get an instant download.

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