



Michelle Shocked, who is in concert Thursday, grew up in East Texas.

MICHELLE SHOCKED: no surprises at Club Clearview

By Russell Smith

"Look, I'll do this, but only if it's subversive in every way — the means and the ends."

That's what Michelle Shocked says she told Polygram Records on the eve of her debut with the label whose chief breadwinner is Bon Jovi. The album, *Short Sharp Shocked*, recently released, is no Dead Kennedys political rant; any sense of subversion is subtle, diffuse. And the music is gentle, often lovely, a natural, un-self-conscious mixture of folk, blues, country and rock 'n' roll. And though the well-traveled Army brat Shocked has lived long as an expatriate (her home now is in England), the spirit of her music is as American as its roots.

Shocked, who opens at Club Clearview Thursday for Billy Bragg, grew up mostly in East Texas — she remembers the piney woods in song — with stops along the way in Europe and in Dallas. On her own, she continued drifting, discovering the loosely organized society of the squatters' underground, from San Francisco to London and Amsterdam.

Her intense political instincts led to arrests at both presidential nominating conventions in 1984 (her new album's cover is a photographic record of one of them), and, for a while, she sported a Mohawk and hung out with the kids who live on skateboards and listen to thrash punk.

Yet Shocked reserves her highest musical accolades for folk singer Guy Clark, whom she referred to as "God Clark" at

the Kerrville Folk Festival a few months ago. It was in a field near the same concert site a few years ago that Shocked played her guitar and sang her songs for a young Englishman who recorded the performance on a Walkman.

The tape, which also picked up the chirping of Hill Country crickets and the occasional sound of a passing car, was turned into an album called *The Texas Campfire Tapes*. The simple, folksy collection went to No. 1 on England's independent-record charts, and Shocked became a cult favorite there and elsewhere in Europe.

When she returned to Kerrville this summer, she played the festival's stage for the first time, and she also sat in on the after-hours campfire jams that have become a Kerrville tradition.

Now that Shocked is in the Polygram fold, with plenty of exposure in the national music media, she worries about the specter of selling out.

"I'm hoping it's a very conscious decision you make to sell out or not sell out," she said in June. "I would die if I found out it's something that just happens with time, slowly wearing away. I'm hoping that, if I can keep it an issue, I'll always be aware of it."

The details:

What: Michelle Shocked and Billy Bragg

When: 8 p.m. Thursday

Where: Club Clearview, 2806 Elm St.

Ticket information: \$13-\$16.25. For information, call 939-0006 or Rainbow Ticketmaster at 787-2000 or metro 787-1500.