

Bragg profits; Shocked only entertains

**Billy Bragg and Michelle Shocked
In Concert
Rockefeller's**

788D

I paid \$15 for a concert ticket to listen to a socialist espouse his doctrine. Who's this guy's business manager? I bet HE'S capitalist.

As expected, Saturday night proved to be one of the most interesting and thought-provoking shows of the year at Rockefeller's.

This was Billy Bragg's long-awaited second Houston appearance. His last show was almost five years ago as the opening act for the Fleshtones and Echo and the Bunnymen at Cullen Auditorium.

That night, Bragg — a relative unknown — stunned the capacity crowd and quickly brought them to their feet with the powerful onslaught of political anthems. Only an occasional boyish "thank you" was mumbled between songs.

Saturday night, however, the British singer turned the stage into a soap box to preach his socialist ideals, bathroom humor and nonstop political satire in support of his "capitalism is killing music" tour.

Announcing that he was "no Jack Kennedy," Bragg, unfortunately, spent the majority of the evening preaching instead of playing — a mistake. The jokes and sexual innuendos soon wore thin.

The highlight of the evening, however, was folk singer Michelle Shocked. The Texas-born singer proved why she's been dubbed the "Joan Baez of the '80s," performing most of the selections from her critically acclaimed album, *Short Sharp Shocked*, to perfection.

Although all of her songs came across well, the humorous "VFD" and the politically-charged "Graffiti Limbo," about social injustice involving the mysterious death of a New York graffiti artist, were the show's highpoints.

Offering a combination of jarring vocals, poetic ballads and an

at-ease stage presence, Michelle Shocked gave the audience a sampling of the newest voice of the '80s. As for Billy Bragg, perhaps he should have followed the advice he gave on his last American album entitled *Back to Basics*.

— Howard Klatsky