

## Bragg, Shocked

*Wiltern Theatre  
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By IAIN BLAIR

This was not the evening for anyone in the mood for a little light-hearted stroll through the undemanding pastures of pop. Both Billy Bragg and Michelle Shocked are on the cutting edge of the current "back to basics" movement of angry young singer-songwriters with something more on their minds than mere entertainment. Though from vastly differing backgrounds, Englishman Bragg and Texan Shocked are united by a common goal — political and social change, using music as a tool of communication.

Bragg has steadily carved himself a strong following with his acerbic wit and sharp satire since he first emerged from a working-class London suburb in the late '70s, and he did not disappoint the faithful, as, accompanied for the most part with only his guitar, he pumped out a series of hard-hitting songs from such albums as last year's "Back To Basics" and his current, jokily titled

"Help Save the Youth of America."

It was an engaging, surprisingly humorous performance, but there's no doubt that while, as the singer maintains, "Capitalism is killing music," he could also do with a little help occasionally from some other musicians.

The real eye-opener of the evening was Michele Shocked, whose own life story rivals anything she could write. The eldest of eight in a Texan fundamentalist family, Shocked ran away from home at 16 and was later put in a mental institution by her mother. Now 26, Shocked looks like a punk but sings like an angel. Her songs, intense slices of raw life, are obviously based on experience, and her crystal-pure voice provides a chilling counterpart to the sentiments she expressed.