



# Revolution Rock

(As in 'Talkin' 'bout  
a...', 'You say you  
want a...', etc.)

BILLY BRAGG (above), MICHELLE SHOCKED (left), and MANCOTAL will perform at the Power Center tonight starting at 7:30 p.m. Tickets are \$14.50.

# Shocked: Runaway returns to roots

BY LISA MAGNINO

7880  
As a somewhat native Texan, I face the inevitable jokes about oil wells, boots, tumbleweeds, and — of course — country music. And I put up with them because, deep down inside, I'm proud of the fact that I'm from Texas, and, deep down inside, I'll admit that I miss it sometimes, even if I pretend that I'm glad to be away from it.

So imagine my delight when I picked up Michelle Shocked's second album, *Short Sharp Shocked*, and heard the good ol' boy commentary of "(Making the run to) Gladewater": "Tuck your jeans in your boots/That's what you do/Slap your gimme cap on/Turn the country music radio station/Louder than you ought to."

Even if you aren't one of the fortunate few "Small town Texas Sons and Daughters" that she mentions, you can still appreciate Michelle's great Loretta-like vocals and countryfried flavor of Don Reed's fiddles. Of course, you might not get the nuances of the song, so let a Texan fill you in — they have to make the run to Gladewater because their own county is legally "dry" (you can't buy any alcohol there) and have to go to another "wet" county to get anything. This is a true Texas touch, and I love it.

Imagine the thrill I got from the rolling landscape lyrics of "Memories of East Texas": "Memories of East Texas and those pine-green rolling hills/Covered in the springtime with golden daffodils/Rowing on Sandy Lake come April/Harvesting hay in June/Sitting by the road watching well-fires burn/By an old October moon."

Imagine the suppressed memories and rueful smile that crossed my face with lyrics from the same song: "What the hell'd you let 'em break your spirit for?" Their lives ran in circles so small/They thought they'd seen it all so/They couldn't make a place for a girl who'd seen the ocean." Yea, I'll swallow my Lone Star love and admit it — just because Texas is bigger doesn't mean it's better. If you want more proof of that, take a look at the cover of *Short Sharp Shocked* — that's Michelle being arrested at the 1984 Republican National Convention in Dallas.

So I can identify completely with Michelle's decision to leave Texas and its mindset to roam the United States and Europe. She became a strolling minstrel for those who couldn't voice their complaints. She was involved in the squatter's movement, the politics of the

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homeless, and spoke out on issues ranging from racism to the environment.

And with these experiences in tow she came back to transform them into empowering ballads that stretch far beyond the Red River. Listen to "Black Widow," the story of the wife of a man killed in Vietnam. Or "Graffiti Limbo," a tongue-in-cheek denouncement about the unjust death of Michael Stewart, a Black graffiti artist who was arrested and then strangled to death before 11 white cops in a New York city subway station. When the case came to court, the coroner had lost

the evidence, and all the police went free.

It's this power that propelled Michelle up the independent label charts with *Texas Campfire Tapes* and placed *Short Sharp Shocked* at number two on the college album charts. And it's this popularity that has her touring throughout the United States and Europe both solo and with Billy Bragg.

So you can understand when I engage in a little Lone Star flag-waving. After all, it all began at the Kerrville Folk Festival, when an unnamed English man approached Michelle and asked her if he could tape her on his Walkman. So amidst the crickets and the roaring trucks of a nearby highway, she sang and she sang and she sang. And these songs

became the simple but captivating catalyst entitled *Texas Campfire Tapes*.

And you can understand why I'm so touched by her. She is living proof that you can take the woman out of Texas, but you can't take the Texas out of the woman. You can hate Texas for its constrained, close-minded attitudes, but you can't hate its wild, wide-open optimism.