

# Anarchy's cricket for Michelle Shocked

Can an anti-establishment folk singer from Texas who lives in a London houseboat change the world by singing with crickets? Michelle Shocked aims to find out.

Shocked, who plays Bogart's Monday night, came to the folk world's attention in 1986 with her debut album, *The Texas Campfire Tapes*.

A wily collection of songs in the dustbowl tones and traditions of Woody Guthrie and Leadbelly, the album was recorded on a Walkman, way backstage at an outdoor folk festival in Kerrville, Texas. While Shocked strummed her guitar and sang, the recorder also picked up the songs of chirping crickets and gear-grinding pickup trucks.

The songs — Shocked's, not the trucks' or the crickets' — were so intriguing that the album wound up topping England's independent records chart. This action did not go unnoticed in America. With all the major labels in this country searching for folk singers, PolyGram Records offered Shocked a recording contract and she accepted.

"Here I am, a self-confessed



**Cliff Radel**  
Pop music

anarchist on a major label," Shocked says. She sends a bemused laugh over the telephone lines from the New York apartment, which is her home away from houseboat when she's touring America.

After signing her contract, Shocked made *Short Sharp Shocked*. As fast as you can say "Karl Marx was right, capitalism co-ops the rebels," the album with such non-anarchistic love songs as "If Love Was A Train" and "Anchorage" was embraced by the establishment and nominated for a Grammy. Although Shocked wound up losing the award for Best Contemporary Folk Recording to Tracy Chapman, she believes she scored a victory for her cause just by being nominated.

"See, I'm attacking the system

from within," she says. "It has to be done. The world is in a terrible shape. The people in power have messed up everything. Look who ran for president last year. Neither candidate was qualified. Who could vote

Shocked

for either one? I didn't."

While Shocked does her part to change the world, she views her efforts with a realistic eye. She knows full well that the songs of one woman could easily be ignored and the world would just go right on spinning out of control.

"That indeed may happen," she admits, "and if it does, I will say goodbye to all of this, get in a boat and just sail away."

*Michelle Shocked plays Bogart's Monday night. Showtime is 8 p.m. Tickets are \$9.75 in advance and \$10.75 the day of the show at all Ticketron outlets.*