

Songs and stories from Michelle Shocked

By Scott Brodeur
Special to The Inquirer

Michelle Shocked got downright primitive: guitar, voice, words. Yet when working together, those three elements provided a punch strong enough to knock over the sellout crowd at the Theater of Living Arts.

In the first of last night's two performances in the intimate theater, Shocked played songs from her first two albums, told stories about growing up in East Texas and exhaled some poignant political beliefs.

Review: Music

Shocked, dressed in a turtleneck, jeans and her trademark cap, got down to business right away, playing her singles "Anchorage" and "When I Grow Up," both from *Short Sharp Shocked*, as the first two songs in her 90-minute show. The first featured a measy two chords, while the other consisted of a repetitive riff. But

stripped down to one guitar and one voice, the songs carried a subtle, powerful eloquence, unlike the more lavishly overproduced versions on the album.

Shocked didn't stray far from the new album, drawing just three songs from her raw first release, *The Texas Campfire Tapes*, which was recorded on a Sony Walkman at a folk festival in 1986.

The simplicity of Shocked's folk-blues songs shined through in last

night's naked setting. But the 26-year-old singer/songwriter didn't seem to mind. Introducing a new song, "Strawberry Jam," about the need for homemade music, Shocked told the crowd, "Music is just like politics: It's too damn important to be left to the . . . professionals."

The Greg Trooper Band, a hot new group from New York, started things off on a good note. The quartet, which has a country-pop sound, played an engaging half-hour filled with melodic, harmony-rich songs.