

# All smiles from groovy Michele

**T**OWARDS the end of her exhilarating hour-and-a-half on stage Michele Shocked made a self-deprecatory comment about "professional folksinger" being a contradictory description.

Ms Shocked began with the disarming freshness of a just-off-the-bus act in some small folk club.

Then she took charge of the big audience with confident ease: a few reverberant chord changes, a song that sounded like a shout, and that sunny smile. It beamed at us from beginning to end.

Three albums, each one exceptional, each one stylistically different, has spread her new reputation abroad before this her first Australian tour.

Her sharp-edged songwriting has given new blood to a musical tradition which has become all but moribund in recent years, or entangled in the solipsisms of the earnest 1980s folkies.

Make no mistake, Ms Shocked's subject matter is still the stock-in-trade of the "protest" singer: corrupt politicians, small lives devastated by large events and a wonderful sense of place. The themes of a drifter also figure large in her songs.

Ms Shocked gently draws her way

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## CONCERT

Perth Concert Hall, Jan 6

MICHELE SHOCKED

Reviewed by MIKE VAN NIEKERK

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through tales of growing up in rural east Texas and life on the road. Her lyrics are masterfully crafted, like a short story writer with a grasp of the vernacular, and her stage stories are the same.

Her style is sweet and strong. She has enormous, uncomplicated charm. That smile keeps on beaming; in performance she stands rooted to a spot just behind the microphone, with an occasional sway of her bare shoulders. An extraordinary voice weaves gracefully around the lyrics.

Simplicity, honesty and no frills are her virtues. A distinctive voice, a confident command of her guitar, to give us plain beautiful songs, and that's it — apart from frenetically fast picking on the mandolin with her father "Dollar Bill", and a terrific duet of a Leadbelly song — Michele Shocked gave one of the most satisfying concerts I've been to in a long time.

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