

Many faces of Michelle

780BA
BY JARE SCOTT
ROCK WRITER

They say none of us sees our- self as others see us. But singer Michelle Shocked has fixed it so that others can see her as she sees herself.

Along with a short autobiography in her record album package, she took a piece of paper and listed 24 terms to describe herself. From squatter to story teller.

Shocked, booked at the Phantasy Theater April 18, doesn't believe in any public relations hype. Among other descriptive words she used: captain, anarchist, psychiatric hospital inmate, jailbird, runaway, rape victim, Mormon fundamentalist, Texan, mandolinist/fiddler, college graduate, C.E.O.

Captain? She lived on a houseboat on an old canal north of London for a while, she said. Saved her from dealing with "scumlords."

"My new album is called 'Captain Swing.' But there's a deeper note to that," said Shocked, calling from her Los Angeles home. "There was a spontaneous revolt movement in the 1820s called 'Captain Swing.' Workers in Britain burned the threshing machines of wealthy land owners. And in France weavers threw their sabots — wooden shoes — into the weaving machines until the looms broke and the owners would negotiate. That's where the word 'sabotage' came from."

Did she see that New York magazine called her a "pinko commie" in its last issue?

"That's fine with me," Shocked said.

Is that "jailbird" notation on her list a misprint?

"No, that's when I was arrested after both the Democratic and Republican national conventions in 1984," she said. "It was a trumped up charge. They could have booked us for blocking a sidewalk, a misdemeanor. But they booked us for conspiring to block a sidewalk, which is a felony," she said. She took the blame, Shocked, as her reaction to the arrests.

She was arrested three times, that summer, in both San Francisco and Dallas. Of course, she did have a Mohawk hairdo and was with a bunch of punks, hippies and beatniks on a "War Chest Tour," to protest corporations who gave money to the political parties, she said.

She was a runaway at 16, she said, after her mother split from the Mormon Church and joined a fundamentalist splinter group in Gilmer, Texas. Shocked ran away to Dallas to join her father, a carpenter, part time teacher and bluegrass music lover. That's where she was introduced to the music of Austin outlaw Guy Clark, Ledbelly, Randy Newman and Big Bill Bronzy. "And to the living underground folk music of middle America's Norman and Nancy Blake, Doc Watson and Hot Rize," she says.

But then she started hitchhiking and joined squatter movements in San Francisco, New York and Amsterdam. "I did not adjust well to Reagan's America," she explains.

She became a psychiatric inmate when her mother had her commit-



Michelle Shocked, Texas rock 'n' roll/blues singer, will have her first date here at the Phantasy Theater.

Michelle Shocked headlines a Phantasy Theater show in Lakewood on April 16. Poi Dog Pondering opens at 8 p.m. Tickets are \$13 in advance at the theater and Ticketron.

ted to a psychiatric hospital in Dal-

las. "She was trying to save me," Shocked said. "They called me psychotic there, but they said I was cured the minute the insurance money ran out."

Rape victim. Can she talk about that?

"Yes, it had a profound affect on my politics. I stopped being a woman so concerned with women's issues. Instead I am trying to use my insight as a woman to understand all kinds of oppression," she said.

The man who assaulted her was in the local peace movement in Italy, a Sicilian, who asked if she would help him deliver some marble to Rome.

"He had it all planned. He assumed because I was a woman traveling without money that was how I made my expenses. He tried to pay me after the rape. This man had an arrogant attitude toward woman that permitted him to do what he did. It's the same attitude that permitted whites in the South to treat another human being as though he were not a human being. I am grateful for the insight."

School at the University of Texas in Austin was the most stable part of her life, she said. She was a speech major. "It sounds crazy, but I was trying to take what I thought was the most impractical course I could think of, when all the yuppies were taking business courses."

She worked in a co-op and worked for the university for two years.

And that's where she started writing songs. Austin was a songwriter's scene. In 1986 she learned she had an album that was No. 25 on the independent United King-

dom charts. An Englishman, Pete Lawrence, had heard her play at a Texas campfire the night after the Kerrville Folk Festival, and asked her to record a few tunes on his Sony Walkman. In spite of weak batteries and crickets chirping, the resulting "The Texas Campfire Tapes" went to No. 2, remaining on the charts for almost two years.

Shocked went to London and stayed awhile.

This led to her next album, the successful "Short, Sharp, Shocked," on PolyGram.

Shocked was cautious about joining forces with a Hollywood producer Pete Anderson, recommended for her current "Captain Swing" album. "But we got along very well. Yes, the record is different, it swings more. We've got horns on it."

Shocked will have a drummer, bass player, keyboard player, a trumpet player and a saxophone player on her tour here.

Shocked still was "able to keep artistic control of her record."

"I didn't know much about the industry, but I applied political principles to my career. I didn't want to be like a third-world country going into debt."

Her single, "On the Greener Side," has more fill than others. "It's a love song, but it gave me an excuse to remind people that the grass is always greener on the other side. The trick is to find out what side that is."

"(Don't You Mess Around) With My Little Sister," with a Presley touch, has other meanings, too, she said. "You can apply it to our government's big brother attitude to Latin America."

So how about that C.E.O. term she gave herself?

"That's corporate executive officer. I'm in a position where I have to overlook the efforts of managers, agents, producers, my record company and my p.r. company (William Morris)," she said.

As well as the changes in the music scene.

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