

Michelle shocked by industry ethics



Michelle Shocked
Plays The Cannery Saturday

Michelle Shocked's recent album *Captain Swing* played up the singer-songwriter's playful side by putting a swinging, highly rhythmic horn section behind a set of upbeat songs.

These days, she isn't feeling so positive.

Michelle Shocked with opening act Poi Dog Pondering. 9 p.m. Saturday. The Cannery, 811 Palmer Place. \$11 limited advance, \$13 at the door. Ticketmaster. 741-2787.

Five months after the release of her album, Shocked, who will perform at 9 Saturday night at The Cannery, is upset at the business practices of her record company — and at the way the music industry at large operates.

In doing so, she offers a damning statement. Gaining the all-important radio airplay for a song, she says, depends on giving money to independent promoters. She says they use the money to give cash, buy drugs or provide other favors to those who decide what songs get played.



FAST TRACKS

Michael McCall

"I really think it has to do with cocaine," Shocked says, almost nonchalantly. "I think it's made a corrupt system even more corrupt. Now the stakes are higher — or at least it costs more."

As Shocked explains it, she originally planned to begin her tour in February, not April.

But her record company decided not to provide the necessary financial support for her tour at the time, she says, thereby cutting out the money and media support she needed to get started on the road.

Please see McCALL, page D-4

Nashville Banner
NASHVILLE, TENN.
D. 67,408

APR 12 1990
BURRELLE'S

FROM PAGE D-1

McCall

Polygram Records also would not push *On the Greener Side* as a single to radio stations — even though a video of the song moved into heavy rotation at MTV, perhaps the most important step to gaining nationwide support for a new song.

"My suspicions are, but the record company will deny it vigorously, is that it has to do with independent promoters and the fact that I'm not paying for them," Shocked says.

"I know that I'm supposed to play this game," she continues. "Basically, I wouldn't play ball. The attitude was, 'If you don't pay, you don't play.'"

On the two hit songs from her second album, *Short, Sharp, Shocked*, she did contribute to outside promotion — even though she says she knew it essentially added up to funding bribery.

The two songs, *Anchorage* and *When I Grow Up*, helped establish Shocked as a gutsy, insightful

singer-songwriter.

But, she says, once she put money into promotion the record company pulled back.

"As soon as I got involved, the record company dropped out," she says. "It seemed like a big scam, and I wanted no more of it."

Shocked, an avowed political leftist who openly admitted she was suspicious of the corporate music business, says she began fearing that playing along with established radio practices were compromising her ideals.

"When my turn came, I thought I'd try to work inside the system," she says. "At this point, I'm not too humble to admit that it's not impossible to change. But I've got to try. It's too easy to stay on the margins."

Shocked also feels her efforts haven't been completely without merit.

"In my own small, independent way, there have been successes," she says. "No, I haven't brought down the misogyny of heavy metal or the racism of pop music. But

I keep a healthy correspondence going with people who write me. Most of it is from women, young women, who get a lot of inspiration from the stories I've told."

The stories refer to Shocked's sometimes shocking private life. She ran away from her Texas home at 17 and was institutionalized by her mother. She later lived as a homeless squatter in San Francisco and London and on a houseboat in Europe. She also has been raped.

"I've not hidden what I've gone through, but these women tell me that they see me as a positive image," she says.

"I think it's because I'm not

compromising, and that's very inspiring to me. A lot of them say they see something in me that's different. I think they probably feel different themselves from the other girls they know."

Shocked pauses and is asked how she feels about this responsibility.

"I'm only too willing to be a big sister," she replies. "A lot of them are thinking about running away. I tell them that whatever you do, believe in yourself. Have confidence. And hold to your convictions."

Michael McCall is senior entertainment writer for the *Nashville Banner*. His column appears each Thursday.