

THE PLAIN DEALER  
CLEVELAND, OHIO  
D. 452,343

OH 91

APR 18 1990  
BURRELLE'S

# Stunning a cappella voice hushes house

78803A  
By JANE SCOTT  
STAFF WRITER

The final encore was over, but headliner Michelle Shocked saved her best shot for the last on Monday night.

"You know if I can do it, you can do it," she told the Phantasy Theater audience, mentioning that most of her guitar riffs had been simple three or four chords.

"Music and politics have a lot in common," Shocked said. Both are too important to be left to professionals.

However, Shocked's band — a guitarist, bassist, drummer, keyboard player, trumpet and saxophone player — was anything but amateur. Nor was Shocked.

The slim, trim, 5-foot-8 singer/guitarist with the colorful past bounced onstage in a black tank top, black slacks, Greek sailor's cap and no makeup. She captivated the crowd with humor as well as her harmonies.

## MUSIC REVIEW MICHELLE SHOCKED

Shocked, who grew up in Texas, is the protester who "didn't adjust well to Reagan's America." She was a runaway at 16, a jailbird six years ago for blocking sidewalks at both the Democratic and Republican national conventions. Yet even her politically aware songs had feeling without a shrill brusqueness. Wit is her weapon. She had a gentle warmth that gave an intriguing contrast to her words.

She squinted her eyes and sang "He may be an absentee landlord/This may be a low-rent universe," during the second song, "God Is a Real Estate Developer." She introduced others with light stories. But then many of her 20 songs, including the boogie-woogie beat of "(Don't You Mess Around

With) My Little Sister," rocked the rafters. The trumpet with the mute attachment gave a splendid big-band touch to such songs as "Too Little Too Late." Others rocked the spirit, as in the subtle "Silent Ways."

In one of her best moves, Shocked put down her guitar and sang solo on the song she said she wished she had written, Steve Goodman's "Ballad of Penny Evans." There wasn't another sound in the room as she sang of the Vietnam widow with two little girls whose war was just beginning. A cappella can be a cruel test — and Shocked passed it easily. Her debut here was a delight.

This concert was almost a double headliner. Poi Dog Pondering, an eclectic band based in Austin, Texas, gave an hour's worth of songs that lifted the spirits, kept feet tapping and earned an encore. You could call the eight-member group "Honolulu Goes to Austin."

It's hard to categorize Poi Dog. Not many rock bands have an able violinist such as Susan Voelz who can play rock as well as soul songs. Then there's accordion player Dave Crawford, who also plays horns and shakes a tambourine. Sometimes the band sounds like a country danceathon, sometimes like fifties rock, no song the same.

Frontman Orrall sang the words "I feel so detached" in the well-crafted "Everybody's Trying" song, but the band is strongly connected. Not only to each other, but to the audience with Orrall's easygoing, fun-loving manner. Orrall twirled a lighted globe around in "Big Walk" and swung a caged light over his head near the end in "Fruitless." Both songs are from the band's new album, "Wishing Like the Mountain and Thinking Like the Sea." Poi Dog should have a global future.



MICHELLE SHOCKED: Her beautiful a cappella performance of "Ballad of Penny Evans" was sung to a rapt audience.

