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Michelle Shocked's electricity wins fans with activist music — '90s style

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REVIEW

*Michelle Shocked with Poi Dog Pondering
Wednesday night at the Spectrum.*

Revenge of the Folkies — Part XII.

If you believe Texas charmer Michelle Shocked, a dancin' fool writhes within the black-clad figure of every politically correct folksinger. Fans accustomed to Shocked's past acoustic campfire shows eagerly embraced the singer's brassy and convincing version of activist music, circa 1990.

What was at first anomalous — Shocked's sensitive folksinger alto buffeted by a punchy six-piece band — turned out to be rollicking and enjoyable. The rail-thin singer bopped about the stage in jeans and a tank-top, wailing her best big-band strut to the delight of a small but devoted crowd.

When I Grow Up broke it to the fans gently, before On The Greener Side had fans scrambling to improvise a dance floor.

Midway through the set Wednes-

day night, the band disappeared and Shocked conjured the charming intimacy of past shows.

Memories of East Texas, Graffiti Limbo and 5 AM in Amsterdam had fans hanging on the singer's every inflection, building to a moving rendition of They Say The War Is Over, But I Fear It's Just Begun. She squirted water at a heckler in irritation, then delivered a naked a cappella version of the song, wringing her hands as she sang. Shocked has performed the song at previous concerts, but never with more conviction.

The eight members of opening band Poi Dog Pondering scrambled the sound man but thrilled the crowd with a loose set. The Hawaii-based Poi Dogs spliced a beatnik attitude on to a tropical sound and, with bongos, guitars and a fiddle flailing, impressed mightily.



Michelle Shocked She was at her wailing best this week