

FRIDAY
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Michelle Shocked to perform

At Salt Lake's country music stations, they don't play Michelle Shocked. In fact they haven't really heard of her and her East Texas twang, even though what she sings is kind of country.

You'll hear her instead on KJQ or on MTV, where her style doesn't quite fit in either. She's sort of Joan Baez meets punk skateboards, or Leadbelly as a yippie activist.

She's hard to pigeonhole, which is just the way she likes it.

The country/folk/blues/bluegrass/swing singer/songwriter will be in Salt Lake on Sunday, May 20 for one performance at Kingsbury Hall. This is her first Utah appearance.

Even her name embodies her off-the-wall persona, like some strange character in a children's story. According to a bio released by PolyGram Records, she made up the name at the Republican National Convention in Dallas, where she was arrested in 1984. Michelle Shocked, as in shellshocked.

There is no clue here about her real name, but the legend of Michelle Shocked, 28, is rich with details.

Raised by her Mormon mother ("austere, fundamentalist" is the way the press release puts it), the oldest of eight children, she ran away from her East Texas home at 16 to live with her father, whom she describes as "one of those hippie, atheist guys."

Her father introduced her to the songs of Doc Watson, Leadbelly and Guy Clark and encouraged her to play the guitar.

Before she drifted back to her mother's home she hitchhiked to San Francisco and New York, and then made her way to Amsterdam, where she became involved in the politics of the homeless, including time spent with the "squatters" who settled into buildings left vacant by real estate speculators. Once she got back home, her mother had her committed to a psychiatric hospital. Once the insurance ran out, Shocked took up where she left off.

In the spring of 1986, working as a volunteer at Texas' Kerrville Folk Festival, she met an Englishman who liked the songs he heard her sing around the campfire. Lawrence pulled out his Sony Walkman and recorded her. Even though the batteries were weak and crickets chirped



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as backup, within nine months "Texas Campfire Tapes" was No. 1 on England's Independent Album Charts.

Since then, PolyGram Records has produced two more albums, "Short Sharp Shocked" and the newly released "Captain Swing."

Tickets for the Sunday night show, which begins at 7:30 p.m., are \$16.50 in advance or \$17.50 the day of the show, and can be purchased at Kingsbury Hall, the Salt Palace and Smith's Tix.