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**BURRELLE'S**

# Performances by Myles and Shocked are hurt by success

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Many artists are more appealing when they are hungry than after they've become rich and famous.

That was demonstrated this week by Alanah Myles, who appeared Monday at First Avenue, and Michelle Shocked, who performed Tuesday at the Historic Orpheum Theatre. Each disappointed for different reasons.

Newcomer Myles was an unknown Canadian hard-rock singer when her "Black Velvet," an attention-grabbing tribute to Elvis Presley, cruised to the top of the charts earlier this year. She has a raspy hard-rock voice in a class with Pat Benatar and Ann Wilson of Heart; she sounds like the daughter of Tina Turner and Rod Stewart. She also has high cheekbones and slinky, sultry looks that have made her a favorite with guys who drool over video vixens on MTV.

In front of a sparse 400 people at First Avenue, Myles was so full of herself that one could even sense antipathy from her four sidemen. There was little camaraderie between her and the band. She seemed more intent on striking sex-kitten poses and acting like a rock star. She was talkative to a fault, babbling about horniness, about Minneapolis being Prince's hometown and about what it will be like to sing "Black Velvet" in 20 years.

It would have been worthwhile to have seen Myles before she scored a hit. She has a stand-out voice and a repertoire of well-crafted, album-oriented, Southern-fried rock that suggests she could become a big-time contender. Monday's performance suggests she's destined to become a one-hit wonder.

Blues-folk singer Shocked made a big impression with her first two albums and her solo performances at First Avenue and the Guthrie Theater. She's a critics' darling, not a best-selling star, but her record label has given her big bucks and artistic license. So last year she got ambitious and made a swing-oriented recording, "Captain Swing," and this year she has hit the road with a six-man band.

It's admirable that she wants to



## Popular Music

Jon Bream

stretch out artistically — she said she didn't want to preach to the converted — but her Orpheum performance was a comedown.

Shocked's three solo numbers Tuesday were outstanding and a mandolin duet, "Jeff Davis," with her father was a treat. But when she played tunes from "Captain Swing" with her band, the arrangements stood out — not her singing. The band overpowered her (especially the sax and trumpet) except on "Anchorage," an old number.

Several other female Texas R&B singers, most notably Marcia Ball, have the vocal power to shine on this material, most of it written by Shocked.

Opening Shocked's concert was John Wesley Harding, the freshest, most charming male folksinger to come along since Billy Bragg. On record, British singer-songwriter Harding, 24, comes across like Elvis Costello. In concert, he's less serious. Tuesday he was a witty cynic and an hilarious pop-culture commentator.

He sang about being the bastard son of Bob Dylan and Joan Baez, offered a straightforward folkie treatment of Madonna's "Like a Prayer" and brought down the half-full house with "When the Beatles in America," which sets the scenario of a Beatles' reunion (a tour cosponsored by Visa and Greenpeace, and a comeback album that sounds like ELO or XTC). He even ad libbed a line about Minneapolis' own Trip Shakespeare.



Alanah Myles: There was little camaraderie between her and the band at First Avenue Monday night.

## Little Feat's fete

"Are you here for Little Feat or for the show?" a concertgoer from Ohio asked a friend of mine at Little Feat's concert Wednesday at the Historic Orpheum Theatre. Indeed, "the show," i.e., watching the crowd (lots of nouveau hippies dancing classic hippie trances) at a Little Feat concert can be quite entertaining. But the concert itself was better than the people-watching.

Little Feat, a cult band during the 1970s, has enjoyed greater popularity since re-forming three years ago and recording two albums with two new members. When the re-tread Feat played at RiverFest in '88, the group seemed a bit tentative, with newcomer Craig Fuller trying to ape the late Lowell George's vocal phrasing.

This incarnation of Feat has hit its stride. Veteran singer-guitarist Paul Barrere has stepped forward as the star and newcomer Fred Tackett has turned into an essential second guitarist, whose battles with Barrere have created a kind of guitar tension that hasn't been heard since Duane Allman was with the Allman Brothers.

Little Feat devoted too much of its 2 1/4-hour concert to material from "Representing the Mambo," its

marginal new album. The only redeeming new numbers were "Rad Gumbo," a Dixie shuffle, and "Texas Twister," a spirited boogie. The Feat dazzled on the oldies, especially "All That You Dream," "Old Folks Boogie" and a 20-minute treatment of "Dixie Chicken" (complete with Billy Payne's Bruce Hornsby-like piano solo) plus 1988's "Let It Roll."

With three guitarists, the band's swampy funk-rock sound was a bit thicker but also more powerful than in the past. None of the singers measures up to George, but Little Feat is still the best boogie cult band in the business.

## Quick spins

Former "Star Search" champ Linda Eder of Anoka makes her recording debut on the brand new "Highlights from Jekyll & Hyde" with Colm Wilkinson. The musical of the same name is bound for Broadway with Eder in the starring role. New on the local recording shelf are Leroy Larson's "Banjo Ragtime" and "Collection," a cassette by Adam Granger, a former regular on "A Prairie Home Companion." He will present an album release concert June 8 at the Cecelia Cultural Center. Something Fierce has re-issued its first recording, "Completely Unglued," and added three new tunes.