

LOS ANGELES ENTERTAINMENT GUIDE

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Live Wires

Guide to Recommended Upcoming Shows

MAHLATHINI & THE MAHOTELLA QUEENS

June 2, UCLA Arts Center

June 4, Hampton's, Santa Ana

There is no doubt that Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens are among the very elite of the world's musical artists in *any* genre. Backed by the Makgona Tshole Band ("The Band That Knows Everything") they pioneered mbaqanga music in the early 1960s and were immensely popular in South Africa. As West Nkosi, their saxophonist and producer says, "We were the Beatles of South Africa." Mbaqanga is a stew made of whatever is available and thus the common food of the South African townships. The music is a jumping combination of traditional rhythms, street jive jazz and international pop. Like food, it is a staple of people's lives. It was, and is, an important element of the cultural resistance to the racial oppression in South Africa. Mahlathini and the Mahotella Queens brought a special intensity of energy to their brand of mbaqanga, and Mahlathini's deep, groaning voice is one of the world's musical wonders. Their utterly astounding show at Slim's last year was a revelation of an incredibly tight and powerful musical force, deeply rooted in an earthy strength but reaching the heights of ecstatic release.

PHOTO: PETER DARLEY MILLER



Michelle Shocked: "I relish the opportunity to dispel the myth of LA as just yuppies in BMWs"

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her home state of Texas in 1983, Shocked has been on the move—settling for a stretch of time on a houseboat moored in Amsterdam because of a strong aversion to the American political regime and policies in the '80s. Now she's here in So Cal and says, "I relish the opportunity to dispel the myth of LA as just yuppies in BMWs with their car phones. Los Angeles is the most culturally and ethnically diverse city in the world. I find it amazing that the ultimate

The concept of swing, says Shocked, "is something you'd prefer not to define, but if pushed against the wall, I'd say it's blues with an up beat." That's only part of the music on *Captain Swing*, however, which also incorporates elements of pop, folk and country—but not to the degree that she has in the past.

On previous tours, Shocked has performed primarily solo—thereby accenting her folk country side. Now she's in the middle of what she calls "a full blown band. It's basically Pete's band, with two horns added." At the heart of the show, however, is still Shocked's strong voice, which can both crack like a bullwhip and skip like a stone across a mountain lake.

—Dave Zimmer

THE SUMMER OF '90... THE SUMMER OF CHANGE CONCERT

June 3, Hollywood Live, Hollywood

The key headlines in the media spotlight recently have focused on environmental concerns. On a local level, some alternative artists, in their minds, also believe they have a cause to promote. Finding artistic venues to perform songs that contain socially conscious lyrics is difficult in today's club scene. 8121 regulars, the Waifs and the Rattles, as well as the Chicago-based group the Modern Day Saints, will all headline just a show. Also appearing on the bill are the nu-folk unit Show of Hands. The Waifs will provide psychedelic-tinged rock with a very contemporary sound, while the Rattles and the Modern Day Saints play in a more driving acoustic and electric style, similar to R.E.M. M.D.S. are also influenced by pop elements, such as Joe Jackson's *Look Sharp* phase. "We want to create an alternate scene for

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—Jonathan E.

MICHELLE SHOCKED

June 1, Ventura Theatre, Ventura

June 2, Wiltern Theatre, LA

Los Angeles has been Michelle Shocked's home for the past year. "I came over [from Europe] last April to record," she says, "and it's been my base ever since—though I'm sure it's temporary." Ever since she left



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white stereotype is what comes through, while all these millions of people from other cultures are being ignored."

This concept of diversity is one that Shocked explores in *Captain Swing* (released last fall on PolyGram). "I very deliberately put a song called 'On the Greener Side' on the record," she says. "It's where I draw from the principal of green politics—which is unity through diversity. But for being pegged as such a political songwriter, I find it amusing that people are hard-pressed to find anything political in that song. But when you understand the motivations behind my songs, it's that just about everything I do with my career is political."

That said, Shocked adds, "People have attempted to portray me as a po-faced, somber serious political protest singer. But it's not accurate. My sense of humor is in there a lot."

This is certainly true of *Captain Swing*, Shocked's latest album. The opening track is called "God Is a Real Estate Developer." Also, fans of Shocked's previous rootsy releases—*Texas Campfire Tapes* ('87 on Cooking Vinyl/PolyGram) and *Short Sharp Shocked* ('88 on PolyGram)—may have been a bit "shocked" by *Swing*'s more produced, musically expanded arrangements. "I gave [producer/guitarist] Pete [Anderson] free reign," she says. "I don't consider myself a recording artist. I'd always interpreted the studio world as very sterile and premeditated. But during these sessions, I was very pleased with how we captured spontaneity and humor."

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—Harriet Kaplan

HOUSE OF LOVE

June 15-16, Roxy, Hollywood

"I genuinely think we're capable of being the biggest band of the '90s," says House of Love singer Guy Chadwick. Big words perhaps, but since the demise of the Smiths, virtually no one has been able to fill their angst 'n' jangle shoes. Not until House of Love, that is. Currently riding the crest of British Top 40 (and American Modern Rock charts) with "Beatles and Stones," a loving tribute to '60s music (still the retro rage in England), House of Love parks its moodiness in California this month. Considering that the group filled its two prior West Coast dates