

Bacchanal gets Shock treatment

By Arthur Salm *7886BA*
Tribune Staff Writer

Hey 'Shel, you know it's kind of funny

Who'd have expected it from Michelle Shocked? The former street waif whose mind-set is still oriented toward the street, Shocked is a deeply committed political activist, a self-described "skateboard punk rocker." Her first album was recorded in a field on a hot Texas night and was backed by a solo acoustic guitar and a chorus of crickets.

Now she's turned out to be a knock-your-socks-off entertainer.

Last night at the Bacchanal she led a blistering six-piece band on joyous excursions into blues, swing, folk, funk and hard, hard, ear-shattering rock. Things even got a little down-home as Shocked picked up a mandolin and brought out her father (mandolin) and brother (fiddle) for a dandy little bluegrass number.

About half of the songs — the punchy blues numbers, for the most part — came from *Captain Swing*, her latest album. But there were also favorites from *Short Sharp Shocked*, including touching renditions of "Memories of East Texas" and "Grafitti Limbo" on which it was just Shocked, an acoustic guitar and an audience that was behind her 99 percent.

The 1 percent could ordinarily be dismissed as typical boorish drunks — were they expecting Ted Nugent? — and not be worth discussing were it not that Shocked's buoyancy and effervescence and sheer delight at making great music were severely deflated by the catcalls. She seemed genuinely upset, and several times reacted by breaking off monologues and perhaps — who knows? — dropping a song from the program.

But after the reluctant, heavily escorted departure of the miscreants — all right, they threw the burns out — the crowd won Shocked back. The amps were cranked up higher still, the party kicked back into gear, and by the time Shocked and the band tore off the roof with "Little Sister" there were just two questions remaining: 1.) How many encores can we coax out of them, and 2.) Will she please, please play "Anchorage"?

Answers: Two encores and yes, she did indeed play "Anchorage."

Ah, keep on rockin', girl.