

## New Michelle Shocked tour features band But her music style remains the same

By Mike Pearson

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Once determinedly solo, Michelle Shocked is learning to fly in formation — and loving every minute of it.

Her first album, 1987's "The Texas Campfire Tapes," was recorded on a hand-held tape recorder and boasted authentic crickets in the background. It brought her to the attention of Polygram Records, which quickly signed her to her first studio disc — "Short, Sharp, Shocked" — an acclaimed work of poetic urgency that spawned a Top 40 hit and made its composer a cause celebre.

Not bad for someone who ran away from home at age 16, changed her name to Shocked, then spent the next few years homeless and living on the edge of society. Her schoolrooms were abandoned warehouses; her classmates were men and women gathered around campfires trading dreams and recounting quiet desperations.

From them Shocked learned that change, however improbable, is always possible when one dares to speak out.

Shocked is now turning with a new album, a new band and the same old activist attitude. But "Captain Swing," her second record for Polygram and most sophisticated studio outing to date, is bound to surprise a lot of her fans, delighting some, and troubling a few more.

Why? Because Shocked refuses to conform to any formula.

"With 'Captain Swing' I'm upping the ante," she says. "I am throwing a monkey wrench in the process by



Michelle Shocked will appear tonight at 9 in the Ventura Theatre.

**WHO:** Michelle Shocked

**WHAT:** in concert

**WHEN:** Ventura Theatre, 26 S. Chestnut St.

**WHERE:** at 9 tonight

**TICKETS:** \$21.50 at the theater box office, Ticketmaster outlets in the May Co. and Music Plus stores and at Video Tyme in Ventura.

which artists get marketed. In a way, I'm making it more difficult for people to know what's going on behind my music by not coming out and doing the same old thing. I don't mind people in the record industry thinking of me as difficult because the opposite of that is adventurism. I'd like to think I'm adventurous."

In fact, for her latest tour Shocked is backed by a six-piece

band, Captain Swing Revue, and the music is decidedly up-tempo, the sort one would revel in on a Saturday night at the dance hall. There's still room for Shocked's introspective acoustic songs, of course, but the emphasis is on toning down the message and getting people to stand up and boogie.

Touring with a band has allowed Shocked more artistic freedom.

"I have been touring solo for three years. Some of that was pragmatic on my part to create a situation where I could tour without depending on the record label for tour support," she says.

"The advantage of a band is that I have a lot more dynamics to work with, and I love the interaction and the travel and the people in the band. I'm also learning; the band sets a standard for me to work toward, so I'm growing as a performer and musician."