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Concert review

## Michelle Shocked

*The Wiltern 78005*  
Saturday, June 2

By IAIN BLAIR

Last time she appeared in Los Angeles, singer-songwriter Michelle Shocked presented herself as somewhat of an angry young woman. With only her simple guitar-playing to match her spare, heartfelt songs about racism and runaways, Shocked, dressed in minimal black, came across as an intense, somber figure. Provocative, occasionally whimsical, but not exactly a barrel of laughs.

But those fans who came to this sold-out show at the Wiltern expecting to see and hear more of the same were in for a major surprise. Shocked was still clad in her trademark black, but she might as well have been wearing a Mardi Gras outfit.

Backed by a tight six-piece band accurately billed as her Captain Swing Revue, Shocked lived up to her name as she powered her way through a rollicking set that put the emphasis firmly on the back beat without compromising her often bleak vision.

Concentrating mainly on material

from her new album, "Captain Swing," Shocked delivered infectious versions of "God Is a Real Estate Developer," "On the Greener Side" and a brand new song called "Everybody's Playing the Game." She also had the nerve to dance and show that she was truly enjoying herself.

Other highlights included a haunting solo version of "Graffiti Limbo," where Shocked's angry lyrics were perfectly counterpointed by a mournful harp, and an appropriately stark rendition of "5 a.m. in Amsterdam."

Purists may carp that the singer has sold out by augmenting her overt politicizing with punchy horns and percolating rhythms — music that makes you want to dance rather than think. But there's no denying that Shocked sounds stronger and more confident as both a singer and a writer, and she tackled the slightly schizophrenic nature of the show — big band swing segueing to introspective solo spot — with ease and wit.

"I prayed to Karl Marx for guidance, but he said he had troubles of his own," she remarked at one point.