

# What's On

## Visiting soloist steeped in folk traditions

By NEVIN TOPP

Michelle Shocked says she was born in "Dollars, Taxes", in 1962.

The American solo singer/guitarist, who will perform in the James Hay Theatre on Tuesday evening, is making a name for herself as an artist from the Deep South, aware of the musical traditions that come out of the region.

Her fourth album is expected out in the middle of this year. Her intention is to tour around in a mobile recording studio making songs with some of her bluegrass and folk heroes.

The best known is Taj Mahal, the blues artist, but others include Alison Crowse and Pop Staples.

Shocked, not her real name, comes from the same tradition as early American folk artists such as Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger. She identified with such singers as Leadbelly and Big Bill Broonzy and these early influences were topped off by her own experiences, such as being homeless and a runaway.

In May 1986 she worked as a volunteer at the Kerrville Folk Festival and Pete Lawrence, an Englishman, requested a few of the songs that Shocked played around a campfire. These were recorded on a Sony Walkman, were released on his Cooking Vinyl label and the album, "The Texas Campfire Tapes", complete with chirping crickets, went to No.1 on the indie charts in Britain.

She was signed to Polygram and released "Short Sharp Shocked" in 1988. "Captain Swing" came out last year, but it showed a more personal viewpoint compared with her previous albums.

However, she has not lost her views over such things as property — she was an activist among squatters in both New York and Amsterdam.

Today, although materially better off, she still does not own her own property, being content to rent because she believes it keeps her in contact with the people who have no hope of owning their own home.

Shocked took the name after a policeman misheard hers as "Miss Shell Shocked".

Her supporting act on Tuesday will be Luke Hurley, the Dunedin guitarist.



MICHELLE SHOCKED