

Michelle Shocked, folksinger

Michelle Shocked, supported by Luke Hurley, at the James Hay Theatre, Christchurch Town Hall, Tuesday, March 5. Running time, 8.05pm to 10.55pm. Reviewed by Nevin Topp.

American folksinger Michelle Shocked did just right from the outset. She took a risk in introducing a trio of new songs — including "Over The Waterfall" and "Cotton-Eyed Joe" — using traditional fiddle tunes and using her own lyrics. The songs will be incorporated in her new LP and they sounded excellent.

Shocked nodded both to the past and the present. She seems to follow the American folk tradition of Woody Guthrie and Pete Seeger, including the wide mixture of styles from her home state of Texas but she also is modern in her outlook. Thus her songs moved from country blues through to rock 'n' roll.

"On The Greener Side" was straight out rock 'n' roll, including Shocked and Wayne Goodwin, violinist and acoustic guitarist from Sydney, doing the Chuck

Berry duck walk. "The Cement Lament" tackled the blues reminiscent of a down-and-out tale from Tom Waits.

Shocked has a reputation for being outspoken, and her voice was strong on the songs which involved social issues. Best of all was "Penny Evans", sung a cappella, about a family whose father was killed in the Vietnam War. It was moving because of Gulf War, acknowledging those who had loved ones, on either side, were killed in the war.

Texas swing came out most strongly on songs such as "Making The Run To Gladwater", showing off Shocked's fine voice and the additional edge given by Goodwin, producer of Joan (Bure) Green's last album in guitar and fiddle accompaniments. However, the tales of Texas, of growing up were even better, touches of bitter-sweet humour on "Memories Of East Texas" and "VFD" about children playing with matches in a dry field.

Luke Hurley opened the first

half, going the traditional way of introducing songs that many were familiar with, starting off with "Moana Lisa", his most popular song, although not likely to be heard on commercial radio. Hurley is not noted for his humour, but he struck a chord with "I'm A Half-Cut Kiwi", including a rendition of the national anthem which ended in the words "God help New Zealand". Hurley might find himself in the same league as Jimi Hendrix and Roseanne Barr for their "offenses" in performing "The Star-Spangled Banner".

The concert was a great success, and Shocked fully deserved her standing ovation.

Those folkies who might have considered Shocked too modern for their tastes ought to think again. She showed that she was fully aware of folk tradition and she had a fine voice to carry that through.

The pity is that New Zealand also has some fine folk musicians creating good music and they deserve an ear as well.

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Date

Record a song with Michelle



MICHELLE Shocked says music is all about feel. To prove her point, she is offering readers of the Daily Telegraph Mirror a chance to take part in recording a song for her new album on March 24. All you have to do is answer two simple questions: At what Sydney venue is Michelle Shocked playing her March 22 show? And what is the name of her latest album? Send your entry, along with your name, age, address and phone number to: Michelle Shocked competition, Phonogram Records, PO Box 112, Alexandria, 2015 by March 17.