

Music

Michelle turns it on for concert-goers

Few would have left Michelle Shocked's concert last Saturday unhappy. The gentle Texan folk singer gave her best in a wide-ranging performance that also gave a glimpse of the woman behind the songs.

From the minute she took the stage and flashed her winning smile she had the capacity State Opera House audience in Wellington hooked for an hour-and-a-half.

Against a backdrop of three suspended sails and accompanied by fellow guitarist and fiddler Wayne Goodman, Shocked strummed, rocked and wooed the crowd.

Mellow folk songs were mixed in with heavier political tunes and Shocked just kept on singing in her flawless, rich-as-honey voice.

Dressed in soft black bly trousers and a fresh white shirt, Shocked was clearly at home on the stage, perched on her stool, singing and strumming. Perhaps it was her longer hair or the absence of her familiar black cap,



MICHELLE SHOCKED hooked audience from the start.

or even her engagement and impending marriage, but Shocked seemed somehow more toned

Folk singer Michelle Shocked's Wellington concert gets a ***¹/₂ rating from Tracy Buckland.

down than past hype has lead people to believe.

All the same, her politically-motivated songs about the world's injustices were out in force.

They ranged from life in a squad to violence against women but none was more haunting than her unaccompanied Ballad of Penny Evans, which told of a woman and children whose husband and father went away to Vietnam and did not come back. Present day parallels were obvious.

However, down-home songs based on her growing years in the Lone Star state also featured taking us back to East Texas with drives to Gladewater for booze and the preaching ways of Sister Cindy and Brother Jed.

Fine fiddling from Goodman added considerably to the Texan feel of the songs as did Shocked's own subtly accented voice.

As the colours which lit-up the sails moved from the yellows of

dawn through to the orange of sunset, Shocked gave a good taste of songs from all three of her albums.

Crowd pleasers had to be My Little Sister, I Want To Be An Old Woman and of course, one of her most well-known hits about long distance friendships, Anchorage.

Shocked may sing and strum away at gentle sounding songs but that belies a depth of intensity and feeling that she portrays on stage.

She has come a long way quickly from the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas where she was "discovered" but seems to have kept a down-to-earthness and unassuming manner along the way.

Hers was a concert that the predominantly female crowd wanted to hear and she gave as good as she could, leaving goers smiling and keen for more but having to be content with recordings at home and a wait for her next visit.