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## REVIEW

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# Michelle Shocked — and got away with it

**Y**OU can call Michelle Shocked anything as long as it isn't predictable. That was the message on Saturday night as the Texan singer did her best to escape the stereotypes.

"It's no secret that political correctness has become a serious moral disease," she told her audience in a cute east Texan drawl. Most of us didn't have a problem with that; we only began squirming when she observed, "And you do seem like a bit of an anal retentive bunch..."

It takes someone as friendly, playful and unpretentious as Ms Shocked to get away with a comment like that. She did, of course, and the next second the aisles were crammed as fans embraced their cue to dance.

When she played here early last year, Ms Shocked stunned us with a spare, display of her voice and her acoustic

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### CONCERT

Michelle Shocked (Palais, Saturday).

SUZY FREEMAN-GREENE

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guitar. This time we saw a rockier, even more relaxed version. Her decision to tour with The Messengers signals a desire for a musical change and she seemed happy to be playing with other musicians.

Ms Shocked is a performer who escapes classification. She smiles and screams and slaps her guitar; then quietly tells us a slyly funny story. One minute she is clowning around; the next she sings the fiercely sad ballad of a Vietnam war widow that leaves you stiff with anger.

Her unconventional concert began with a set from the Messengers; who were later joined by Ms Shocked for a

number of rock and roll tracks. After an interval, she sang a brilliant acoustic set and then introduced a surprise guest, Paul Kelly, whose version of 'Tighten Up' could have done without the additional female vocalists.

She sang favorite tracks from 'Short, Sharp, Shocked' and 'Captain Swing' in her clear, sharp voice. A highlight was her reworked version of an old fiddle tune called 'The Weavin' Way'; my only reservation was that it would have been nice to have heard some more new material.

This was her first show with the Messengers and while she is obviously an admiring fan it was still very much a love affair between Ms Shocked and her audience. The sheer force of her exuberant personality ensured a wonderfully intimate night. Her advice was, "This is your party so swing it." It was followed to the last beat.