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# That's Entertainment!

## Shocked music hits out with feeling



MICHELLE SHOCKED — music that flows like the Mississippi.

Michelle Shocked is a grassroots performer whose music reveals a concern for ordinary people and hits out at hypocrisy of all kinds.

A young runaway, she experienced a life on the margins that became the inspiration for her music with its raw and direct style.

For her there is none of the usual false hype with the news that 'the next greatest world band' is about to hit town. Instead, her publicity material includes an 'autobiography'.

It offers a glimpse into the life of the girl 'born in Dollars, Taxes (sic) in 1962'.

She said: "I spent my years travelling around army bases until 1977 when my stepfather retired and we moved to Gilmer, Texas.

"At 16 I ran away from home and in 1979 I went to live in Dallas with my father.

"I had always spent my summers with him going to bluegrass festivals and back-porch picking sessions...

"Two years in Austin (1981-83) provided the catalyst for my songwriting, an interest and talent that gave me stability in the years that followed.

"Leaving the Republic of Texas in 1983, I did not adjust well to Reagan's America.

"From my first days as a runaway I continued to exist close to the edges of homelessness."

By STEVE PAYNE

Michelle Shocked later joined the squatter movements of America and Amsterdam.

These experiences have given her a clear insight into a life many may never experience.

This insight is evident in the raw and direct music of Michelle Shocked.

She is a rare talent and North Coast fans are lucky to have her back on a second tour of Australia in the space of a couple of years.

Her Byron gig at the Byron Bay Arts Factory on Thursday is one of only three scheduled outside capital cities.

She will be backed by Australian band the Messengers, best known for their six-year partnership with Paul Kelly.

Shocked is expected to sing some Paul Kelly compositions in her set, as well as songs from her albums 'The Texas Campfire Tapes', 'Short Sharp Shocked' and her latest release 'Captain Swing'.

'The Campfire Tapes' were based on some of her songs taped on a Sony Walkman.

While working as a volunteer at a Texas folk festival in 1986 an English record producer, Pete Lawrence, made the tapes.

"Recorded on weak batteries and complete with chirruping crickets it went to No 1 in England and stayed in the charts for a

year," Shocked said.

In contrast Shocked describes the styles of 'Captain Swing' as flowing like the Mississippi River, influenced by among others Otis Rush, Bob Willis, Fats Domino, George Gershwin, Jerry Lee Lewis and even African palm wine music.

She said the best music, no matter what style, always has that swing; an organic whole greater than some of its parts.

If you want to hear some 'feeling' music that also has a conscience, hear Michelle Shocked.