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Impact on her. Yet you also know there was enough of the sprightly Imp in her to tease guitarist Steve Connolly that 'that would be the last chance he'd have of getting the solo right' when she returned for her first number, *When I Grow Up*. There was just such an atmosphere of fun, feeling and camaraderie, the audience was swept away with it. You literally glowed as you left the theatre later.

THAT warmth was just as evident with the five songs the Messengers did to open the night's proceedings, and though they didn't exactly 'rock the house', the promised album that the Messengers hope to release later this year looks well worth seeking out. The songs were sharp, well arranged, thoughtful mid-paced numbers, with a gloss of harmonies that swung between The Hollies or some 70s West Coast American sort of thing, songs that will quietly insinuate rather than bludgeon you for attention. The democratic air and the friendly approach proves Paul Kelly was right to surround himself with such players, straightforward and completely committed to the songs not the egos.

THAT goes for Ms Shocked as well. She came out flouncing like some gawky walf, smile, to quote her once again, from our interview, 'as big as the cat that got the cheese', and ran through the repertoire provided by her two studio albums with a slightly nervous ease that was at once charming in its innocent naivety and powerful for its disarming honesty. She just loved it, but it was a love born of the passion she has for the songs, the music from which she springs and the players with whom she is working than for any desire to be 'up there' on a stage. And her performance was as various as her catalogue — she would swing like the sassiest little soul sister one moment, slip into the almost shy walf the next, and step forward with a knowing anecdote with the ease of

a sprulker from a medicine show the next, and never once did it seem contrived but true reflections of the person. There was no way she was going to be pigeonholed as a 'this' or 'that' performer, because she was 'this' and 'that' and then some.

IF anything, her music, which springs from folk, rock, jazz and country, is the natural heir to the likes of Woody Guthrie and Hoagy Carmichael — Guthrie for the political edge and Carmichael for the homespun philosophy and a dash of that swing. But even that sort of comparison is too limiting. She is the latest in a long line of American singer *storytellers*, not merely songwriters, and storytelling with the kind of easy charm of Garrison Kellor and *The Prairie Home Companion*. She just made you feel good, and she was damned if the overenthusiastic security people at the Enmore were going to stop those that wanted to get up and 'save their butts' with some dancing from having as much fun as she was so obviously having up there on the stage. Having spoken to her, I know how privileged she feels to be up there. Having seen her up there, I know now how privileged we are that she is there.

SHE broke the show up into three parts, ultimately, with the swing coming up for the first half, the bitter-sweet stories opening the second half, and the rockier numbers to take us out. And for those who had expected a performance laced with a more stinging political edge, she reminded them of her own coming to terms with that old bugbear, the 'correct' ideological approach. The advice was 'don't preach to the converted' but, thanks to a visit by the spirit of Marilyn Monroe, the wonderfully apt 'entertain the troops!' If we are potentially the people who can change the world, then I can assure you that Michelle Shocked fulfilled that requirement to the letter. The troops went back out to continue the 'fight' well and truly entertained.

— MICHAEL SMITH

MICHELLE SHOCKED & THE MESSENGERS

Enmore Theatre
23/3/91

WHAT a wonderfully joyful, tearful, thoughtful and, to use the word she so enjoyed tossing off with Impish Irony, 'empowering' is a Michelle Shocked concert. And with what humility and boundless naive enthusiasm she presents that concert. The show I attended was the last of her current Australian tour and she came out before the set the Messengers would play to open the two hours or so show with a plea that we attend well the songs of this band she had become so respectful of, the band she would miss so very much, and from the moment she began you knew the comments were totally genuine, the sentiments truly heartfelt and the bond that had been forged over the few weeks she and The Messengers had worked together were to have a lasting

