

## Michelle Shocked & the messengers palais theatre

When the curtain raised, there was a sole lantern wandering across the darkened, smoke covered stage. The sound system rang with the eerie sounds of a creaky ship at sea. From the darkness Michelle Shocked welcomed us aboard.

With admiration and praise, Shocked introduced the Messengers, then made a quick departure. The band played a few tracks, displaying their own song writing skills and musical cohesion. The audience listened patiently as they waited for the little Texan they'd all come to see.

The acoustic strains of *When I Grow Up* came booming out, but Shocked was nowhere to be seen. Then a flash of light and her silhouette was larger than life on one of the ship's sails in the back drop.

Among all of this grandeur and production, there was a note of anxiety in the audience that Shocked would offer no personal contact. But she quickly dispelled this anxiety and persuaded much of the audience to get up and dance in the aisles.

She jumped through her faster tracks like *Love Was A Train* and *On The Greener Side* with the Messengers. Solo, she filled the empty stage with her presence and charisma. Over the repetitious guitar of *Graffiti Limbo*, Shocked recounted the story of a black American graffiti artist murdered at the hands of eleven white transit police in New York.

Oddly enough, an interval was announced

just as the concert began to really swing. I feared this would kill the momentum and feel of the performance. But it proved to be just the opposite.

Shocked reappeared, solo, to do *Memoirs of East Texas*, then sang the haunting *Ballad of Perry Evans*. It's a tale of a twenty-one year old Vietnam War widow and her grief and suffering. Shocked's voice, wrought with emotion, was so beautiful that the audience sat in perfect silence, overwhelmed by her talent.

Rejoined again by the Messengers, Shocked grooved through more of her own tracks. She danced with the band and her audience, always smiling her heart-warming grin. Apologising to Paul Kelly, which she need not have done, Shocked sang his track *Everything's Turning White* almost as well as Kelly himself.

Shocked then invited Kelly to centre stage where he played one of his own tracks. Kaarin Fairfax (alias Mary Jo Star), Deborah Conway (ex Do Ri Me) and Shocked all screamed the backing vocals, some of which were slightly off. In this musical collaboration, Shocked's enthusiasm and spirit spread all over the stage to create a musical party.

The encore was, of course, *Anchorage*. After this, Shocked dragged the Messengers back on stage for applause. But when the time came for her praise, she took a timid bow and scurried off. This cot behaviour only added to her Texan charm and made the audience drown the Palais in applause for Shocked's brilliant performance.

CAROLYN MACDONALD



## Michelle Shocked extra show

Michelle Shocked and The Messengers return for an encore performance this Sunday 17 March at the Old Greek Theatre. Reactions to her first show at the Palais Theatre were uniformly positive, with BEAT reviewer Carolyn MacDonalad noting in her review on Page 51 that it was a "brilliant performance." Hurry book now, to avoid disappointment. Tickets are available through all the usual outlets or you may phone book on 11500.

THE AGE  
Melbourne, VIC.

11 MAR 1991

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### REVIEW

## 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 anti-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

### CONCERT

Michelle Shocked (Palais, Saturday).

SUZY FREEMAN-GREENE

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 streams and slips her guitar; then quietly tells us a wily 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'. Any oily 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 admirer, 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.