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A history lesson by Michelle Shocked

by STEPHEN NEWMAN

Senior Staff Writer

Hey y'all, let's go to the hoe-down! Michelle Shocked returned to her roots Wednesday night at the Harvard Saunders theater playing straight-ahead country, Tennessee bluegrass and Mississippi blues.

The two-hour show included several tunes off Shocked's previous releases. Her first set was all acoustic highlighted by impressive solo efforts on the guitar and mandolin. For much of the show, however, Shocked was supported by the Bad Livers out of Austin, Texas.

The uncorrupted, stripped down acoustic versions of her past hits "Memories of East Texas," "On the Greener Side," "Cement Lament" and "Anchorage" were Michelle Shocked at her best.

Having pointed out during the show that both politics and music are too important to be left to professionals, Shocked gave a laid back performance that was, nonetheless, refreshing and bold.

She conducted sing-a-longs, led a sit-down square dance, and invited one audience member up for an impromptu mandolin lesson.

The Saunders theater for those two hours was transformed into a barn in the deep south. With mandolins, fiddles, and banjos, Shocked and company delivered

a second hour of unadulterated hillbilly blues and folk fiddle tunes.

An old friend of the artist's, Mr. Bones, made a surprise appearance playing the bones, the only percussion instrument in the lineup besides the upright bass. Dany Barnes was especially impressive with his command of everything between the steel slide guitar and banjo. His playing added a soulful twang to the Shocked's toe-tapping arrangements.

Shocked, also a Texan, has just finished cutting an album of the traditional fiddle tunes spoon fed to her growing up in Texas and throughout the South. She put her own lyrics to these pieces, which included the southern favorite, "The Cotton Eye Joe."

Her album due out in February, *Arkansas Traveller*, was recorded all over America and Australia. She shoved a 48-track studio in the back of an 18-wheeler and hit the road to team up with her heroes.

Tunes on the album feature Uncle Tupelo, Pop Staples, Doc Watson, Garth Hudson and Levon Helm, Red Clay Ramblers, as well as Paul Kelly and the Messengers.

The album is a departure from the swinging big band style ar-
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Album due in February —

SHOCKED

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Arrangements of Shocked's last album, *Arkansas Traveller* captures a slice of American history as expressed through music. The hymns, ballads and folk tunes of the Civil War era are among the

works examined by Shocked in this latest project. It's a history lesson she preaches to her live audiences, and one well worth waiting for in the musical form when it hits the shelves come this February.
