

CALENDAR

MONDAY

NOVEMBER 25, 1991

Yoakam Delivers Rock-Flavored Honky-Tonk in Show at Universal

The shimmying legs and swiveling hips weren't enough to knock the chip off Dwight Yoakam's shoulder on Friday at the Universal Amphitheatre. In his comments between songs, the singer continued to portray himself as the upstart who showed the country-music Establishment that there's an audience for what he calls "hillbilly" music.

While not entirely assimilated by Nashville, the L.A.-based Yoakam has been widely accepted, so he's a little less convincing as a maverick. Still, he came off as an edgy eccentric at Friday's concert, alluding to his own weariness and at times adopting an exaggerated, slightly slurred voice. Now that he's made country safe for hillbilly, maybe he wants to do the same for weirdness.

The show was dominated by

rock-flavored honky-tonk, with the sound cranked up to a harsh level that flattened his vocal nuances. With a minimum of new material and a band that let each song slip into routinism after an opening rush, the set lacked urgency and drive, except for the bowl-'em-over lead guitar of Pete Anderson and a guest spot from Emmylou Harris on the encore. That's when Yoakam finally came fully alive to the moment.

Yoakam's audience seemed respectful of but perplexed by opening act Michelle Shocked. Accompanied by banjo, fiddle and bass, the erstwhile political folkie and blues mama stood in front of a Dogpatch stage set and delivered a series of traditional string-band tunes, some of them fitted with her new and telling lyrics.

—RICHARD CROMELIN

Fill.
— ED
— FORD
— Dana