

SONNY LANDRETH

**In his own words,
bayou guitar ace
unintimidated by
gifted colleagues**

By Steve Dollar
STAFF WRITER

Louisiana slide guitar whiz and singer-songwriter Sonny Landreth knows how to pick his moments.

On the road to promote his major-label album debut, the 42-year-old session musician is sharing the stage with two legendary talents and a noise-making cult artist whose collective reputations might easily intimidate.

As much a fan as he is a player, Mr. Landreth simply is pleased to be keeping such company.

"It's such a spectrum," says the Canton, Miss., native, who joined the tour this week and performs tonight at Variety Playhouse. "To my right is Guy Clark and on the other end is Allen Toussaint. And next to me is Michelle Shocked. It's so personal and intimate, it's real hard for me not to play along with them."

Even, Mr. Landreth admits, when he doesn't know some of the songs — whether the tall tales of Texas roustabout Mr. Clark, the syncopated New Orleans pop of Mr. Toussaint or the cheeky folk tunes of Ms. Shocked.

"Michelle will hand me her guitar and pick up a mandolin. Allen, he'll give me a rhythm and tell me a chord and off we go. We're on the edge, skating out about as far as you can imagine."

When he's not caught up in such a vibe, Mr. Landreth expects to perform songs from "Outward Bound," his first release on a major label (Zoo), which draws strongly on imagery of the bayou country where the guitarist lives.

"I'll probably even play some blues tunes," says Mr. Landreth, who is best known for his work with singer John Hiatt, and will lay down some subdued bottleneck slide guitar during his performance. "I'm the only plugged/unplugged player onstage."

CONCERT PREVIEW

**In Their Own
Words: Guy Clark,
Sonny Landreth,
Michelle Shocked,
Allen Toussaint**

8:30 tonight. \$12. Variety
Playhouse, 1099 Euclid
Ave. N.E. 524-7354.