

Michelle Shocked logs more miles on her lonesome road

By GREGORY J. PLESHAW

When Michelle Shocked takes to the stage Saturday night at Luna, many may wonder just which Michelle we'll see.

Will we see the waifish acoustic songwriter runaway who hit the scene out of nowhere in 1988 with the Top 10 indie single, *Anchorage*?

Will we see the blues and swing aficionado who dropped her acoustic guitar in favor of synthesizers and trumpets in her 1990 release, *Captain Swing*?

Will we see the Shocked of 1992's *Arkansas Traveler*, which showed Shocked home-made jammin' her rural country roots all over the world?

Or will we see a new Shocked, perhaps get a glimpse of her as yet unreleased new album?

Docked outside of London on the Thames in her house boat, (no phone) Shocked is unavailable for comment at the moment, but according to her L.A. publicist, she is currently traveling with a funk band, and performing a genre-splice of funk and folk that she calls **FONK**.

Seems that funk has become the new buzz-phrase for a lot of bands these days, and for Shocked, it's another evolution in a short and sharp career that has seen many changes.

When Michelle Shocked was 16, she ran away from home in Texas.

At 19, her parents institutionalized her.

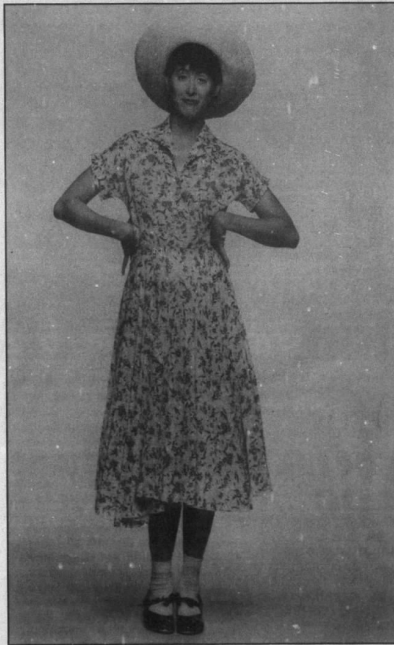
At 20, she was back out and spending her nights in squats across Europe, and at 24, she was accidentally discovered by a producer with a Walkman Pro.

Does this woman have the pedigree to play alternative music or what?

Shocked, who took her last name after her arrest at the 1984 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco to describe the feelings she felt at Reagan-era excesses, never had any inclination to record the music that she played along the way, which she felt was her contribution to the world-wide community of homeless youth.

"Being a homeless young person is being a part of a despised class," she said in a 1987 interview. "That's why I write songs with a political slant."

In 1986, Shocked found herself at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Kerrville, Texas. She'd



Michelle Shocked will play Luna

gone to retrace a bit of her roots — she used to attend the festival with her father and brother when she was a little girl.

While at Kerrville, Shocked experienced the discovery story of her generation. Sitting on a fence post, playing her tunes, producer Pete Lawrence approached her and asked if he could record her.

Pulling out his Walkman Pro, Lawrence taped about an hour's worth of material. A few months later, *The Texas Campfire Tapes*, unedited and complete with crickets in the background and trucks rumbling by, was released in Great Britain on Cooking Vinyl records. It soon rocketed to number one on the British independent charts.

Soon after that windfall, Mercury Records came a' knockin' and signed Shocked up to the big time. Offering her an undisclosed advance on her first album, it was widely reported that she gave much of it back, "in order to give Mercury the ability to develop other artists."

Shocked's first album on

Mercury, *Short, Sharp, Shocked* was released in 1988 and features a cover photo of her '84 arrest at the Democratic National Convention. The album is a haunting and melodic acoustic tribute to the songs of her Texas youth.

The album's big hit was *Anchorage*, a stripped-down roots ballad of a woman's life on the road.

Short, Sharp, Shocked firmly placed her in the stellar constellation of late '80s alternative rock, and paved the way for her appearance at the quasi-secret Monsters of the Left tour, a 1989 package that included Shocked, English commie-rocker Billy Bragg, and various speakers from the Left Wing.

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DETAILS	
Who:	Michelle Shocked
What:	In concert
When:	8 p.m. Saturday
Where:	Luna
Tickets:	\$15 advance; \$17 at the door