

POP MUSIC

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR HER MUSIC, SHE SAYS

# Shocked: 'Cleaning House'

**I**T WASN'T EASY getting in touch with **Michelle Shocked**. She is not getting along with her record company, has no official manager and has just signed on with a new booking agent. A trail of messages, however, led to a call from Shocked in Philadelphia, on her way to this area. She and her new band, the Casualties of Wah, are at the Bottom Line in Manhattan tonight and tomorrow night and at the Stephen Talkhouse in Amagansett on Monday.

"I like to think I'm cleaning house in the positive sense," Shocked said. "I am taking responsibility for my own creativity, and realized I'm not making music to make a label, manager, or agent happy. I'm doing it for myself. I wanted to be around people who care about me. So I hope it's not coming from a neurotic need to clean out the barn." One also hopes the record company tribulations work out amicably. Shocked says she's been granted her release from Mercury Records. Not so, says the label. "As far as we're concerned, she's still a Mercury artist," said Mercury spokeswoman Dawn Bridges.

From the time she was discovered performing at a folk festival in Texas, in 1986 (the ensuing debut album, "The Texas Campfire Tapes" was recorded on a Sony Walkman), Shocked has pursued unpredictable directions, mixing punk and folk, bluegrass and swing, politics and spirituality, storytelling and self-discovery. The new band is named after a wah-wah pedal, and reflects Shocked's current interest in funk.



**Wayne Robins**

"We don't have enough material to make it a complete funk show," according to Shocked. (The new band played its first show just a month ago.) "We've taken some old material and rearranged it. 'When I Grow Up' was inherently unclassifiable; we just brought up the funkier side." Shocked also plays a good deal of electric guitar, which is a recent development. "I always thought of the guitar as a percussion instrument, which is why I have had a penchant for playing acoustic. But I'm a pretty good rhythm player, so it works pretty well on electric guitar."

Shocked's new songs show the influence of important changes in her life: marriage to writer Bart Bull, and a return to church. Shocked was raised in a fundamentalist environment which, she said, "convinced me that God was a narrow-minded bigot." Even recently, she was startled to hear a Sunday school teacher say, "The Bible says Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve." Said Shocked: "That kind of hate-mongering has no place in church; my own beliefs tell me that God is about the transcendental power of love, and that's why I went back to church."

**Michelle Shocked and the Casualties of Wah.** Tonight and tomorrow night at the Bottom Line, 15 W. 4th St., Manhattan. Shows at 7:30 and 10:30 each night, tickets \$15. Monday night at Stephen Talkhouse, 161 Main St., Amagansett. Show time 8 p.m., tickets \$40.



**At the Bottom Line and Stephen Talkhouse: Michelle Shocked**

Arthur Blythe and Sly Stone. The versatility of the musicians allows them to take respectful liberties with the compositions.

"It's not like going to a bar to hear a top forty band," Fields said. "It's very much a celebration of the spirit of the music that attempts to keep the integrity intact while letting you hear something new."

**Black Rock Coalition Orchestra.** Tonight at Wetlands, 161 Hudson St., Manhattan. \$8. Sets at 11:30 p.m. and 1:30 a.m.

**Notes From the Maestro**

**Johnny Maestro and The Brooklyn Bridge**, who perform tonight at Danfords Inn in Port Jefferson, acquired their name from the skepticism of their first manager, who compared promoting an 11-member band to selling . . . well, you know.

Today, 54-year-old Maestro and his unwieldy band are a considerably easier sell, thanks largely to an oldies boom that keeps him and his East Coast-based contemporaries like Jay Black out of retirement and out on the road.

And, ironically, noted Maestro, "The availability of our live music is much greater now. When we first began, there were only a handful of promoters, and not that many rooms to play in."

Though The Brooklyn Bridge still produces new material (Maestro's Bay Shore home also houses a recording studio), the releases often founder in record-