

Michelle Shocked

began her recording career homeless, and now finds herself record company-less. *Kind Hearted Woman*, which first occurred to Shocked while she was playing a gig in Bozeman, caused her to part ways with Mercury Records. She produced the CD independently, and is selling it only at her concerts.

Locals will have a chance to pick up a copy when Shocked plays her first gig in Missoula at the University Theatre on Thursday, August 11 beginning at 8 p.m.

Expect an exuberant, wild and passionate performance — based on reviews of her earlier shows this year in the U.S., U.K. and a headline gig at the Newport Folk Festival.

The first part of the concert will feature songs from *Kind Hearted Woman*, according to her husband, Bart Bull, former editor with *Spin* magazine. While the second part will be “loose, unstructured fun” with her taking requests from the audience for her oldies. Members of the Irish band, Hothouse Flowers, will accompany her.

Also expect the unexpected. One music critic described Shocked as a “punk-rock/folk-country genderbender with in-your-face politics.” Another calls her “unclassifiable.”

Shocked says *Kind Hearted Woman* harkens back to her earlier works, *Short Sharp Shocked* and her first bootleg recording, *The Texas Campfire Tapes*. All three records contain what she calls “story songs.”

“It could not be an accident that five of the ten songs on the album deal with death,” Shocked says. “Death is a metaphor for the death of a certain kind of innocence, the death of certain possibilities, of hope.”

For those who think this means the songs are dreary, think again. A *New Yorker* reviewer found them exhilarating, comparing them to songs on Bruce Springsteen’s varied *Nebraska* album.

Shocked says she knew she was taking a risk pursuing this project, but felt she should go ahead with it. She was at a stage of her life at the time, she says, that just meant to be.

This tour isn’t your typical promo tour, they say, it’s your typical rock star. For instance, she’s not thinking she wanted to be a rock star,



according to Bull. She was reared as an army brat in East Texas, living with her stepfather and mother until she ran away from home at 16.

From the ages of 21-26, she was homeless and active in the squatters movement — homesteading empty warehouses in New York. One day she received a letter telling her that a bootleg tape of her, recorded with a Walkman, was

climbing England’s music charts. She was invited to do a tour, and the rest is history.

The title of Shocked’s current CD comes from her homeless days. The squatters used a hobo symbol (a circle with a broken arrow) to indicate an abandoned vacant shelter. This also became the “squatters” symbol. The hobo language of symbols was almost a subculture with an underground vocabulary, she says.

She ran across a description that a drawing of a smiling cat meant that a kind-hearted woman lived there — “someone who would offer a warm meal, an odd job, a place to sleep for the night.”

Or a good concert.

Marga Lincoln

Michelle Shocked will play the University Theatre on Thursday, August 11 beginning at 8 p.m. Tickets are on sale at the ASUM ticket office (243-4999) or at all TIC-IT-E-Z outlets in Missoula for \$15. Tickets sold at the door will be \$17.