

Simply Shocking

Michelle Shocked Takes Charge, Gets Back on Track

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Artists make lousy slaves. That's why Michelle Shocked, the outspoken blues-folk marvel, felt she had to invoke the 13th Amendment (abolishing slavery) in a lawsuit she filed and subsequently settled against her former record company, Mercury. "I was watching my dreams and ambitions being actively destroyed," Shocked said. "I found myself in circumstances that would make anyone cynical and bitter."

Apparently, Mercury hadn't been listening to her albums.

Her three-album trilogy — 1988's "Short, Sharp, Shocked," 1989's "Captain Swing" and 1992's "Arkansas Traveler" — showcases the work of a strong, clever woman intent on changing the system. Not the type to be swept under a rug.

"Part of my agenda is to change the separate-but-equal cultural segregation that I see within the record industry," said Shocked, who will be in the lineup as the "E-Town" radio program tapes in Salt Lake City Saturday night.

Shocked long has criticized the recording industry for ignoring the contribution and influence of blacks. In fact, she wanted to pose in blackface on the cover of "Arkansas Traveler" as a political comment on the min-

■ Shocked on the Air

Michelle Shocked and David Crosby will be the featured entertainers at a performance of "E-Town," a National Public Radio variety program, Saturday at Abravanel Hall, 123 W. South Temple, Salt Lake City. The program will be taped before an audience for a later broadcast. "E-Town" is heard in northern Utah on KUSU, 96.7 FM.

Showtime is 7 p.m. Tickets are \$30 and \$20 at ArtTix. The performance is a benefit for Recycle Utah.

strels' role in American music, but the record company stopped her.

For two years after the release of that album, Mercury wouldn't return Shocked's calls, wouldn't follow through with the funding on her proposed album — in short, ignored her altogether, she said.

"The first suggestion I got was that they had a problem with my material," Shocked said. "Even though it was written into my contract that I had complete artistic control."

"But I speculate that the main reason they did it was simply because they thought they could.

"I think they believed that they have the power to crush any particular individual artist as easily as a bug. They know artists have a time-based career. When a record company isn't doing anything for you for two years,



Michelle Shocked will sing for an environmental cause in Salt Lake.

it can really damage that career."

A spokesperson for Mercury declined to discuss Shocked's comments.

In the meantime, Shocked recorded her own album, "Kind Hearted Woman," and criss-crossed the country on the club circuit. She said it was a difficult time for her, but she found a release through the songs on the CD. (The Private Music label eventually picked it up.)

"I'm sure anyone reading this article can relate to the things I was feeling. Life deals out certain frustrations

no matter how charmed a life you think you lead. In a situation like this, you feel boxed in," Shocked said.

"But in that moment, I had to get real honest. The experience made me realize that I was doing this for no one but myself. In the past, I felt like I had to please the record company or please my manager or the audience.

"When I realized that I was doing this for me, I found the courage to fight. Then God set about to work on my heart, and love took the place of bitterness," she said.