

THE SPOKESMAN-REVIEW

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Michelle Shocked masterful

Concert review

Michelle Shocked
Saturday, Oct. 26, at The Met

By Don Adair
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Michelle Shocked believes in the redemptive power of music; good thing, because it saved her bacon Saturday at The Met.

Red-eyed and barefoot, an emotional Shocked was clearly adrift late in a marathon show that swerved wildly between funk, New Orleans soul, acoustic rural pathos and confessional.

"It's been a very interesting evening," Shocked told the full house after telling a family story that left her drained and almost in tears. "I find myself a little off balance."

But Shocked is a resilient force and she quickly found her equilibrium in

the churchy piano and wild horn play of an unreleased piece of funk, "You Are So Good." Then, two hours and forty minutes after she began it, she triumphantly capped the evening with another funky new tune, "Juicy Lucy," and left the cheering crowd with a wave.

Shocked came into the world a folk-rocker; how she will leave it is anyone's guess. She opened Saturday night with the synth-driven "Let's Create Love," a generic '70s-style soul piece co-written with New Orleans producer/songwriter Allen Toussaint. But before long, she was deep into New Orleans territory, showing off her brassy band, the Casualties of Wah, on a series of romping Mardi Gras and second-line workouts.

But just when it seemed it was going to be an all-dance evening, Shock dismissed the band, kicked off her black platform boots — "I know

these things look good, but they're killing my feet" — and into the emotionally demanding material from her latest record, "Kind Hearted Woman."

If the first half of the show was a rollicking good time, the second was a reminder that the other side of joy is pain. Shocked dug hard into the harrowing songs from "Kind Hearted Woman," warbling some lines Appalachian-style, howling others from what appeared to be the depths of her soul. It's a stunning collection of songs on record; live, they're even more powerful.

Then came the grandmother story and the release through funk. And as deeply as Shocked had taken the willing crowd, she lifted them up again.

Shocked's first Spokane appearance was masterful. Let's hope it's not another decade before she returns.