

Michelle Shocked comes to the TLA on South St. Nov. 8

10544
■ The sometimes punk shouting, sometimes country-folkie singer/songwriter rehashes her battles with the biz.

By Ed Condran
A&L Music Columnist

It's rare that someone is too smart for her own good in the music business but that's been the case for Michelle Shocked. A myriad of talented musi-

cians have cut lousy deals without examining the details of their agreements. As a result, the unfortunate performers end up at the mercy of their respective labels.

Shocked, however, is a different story. The clever singer/songwriter negotiated

her own contract. She made her demands, read the fine print and her then label, Mercury Records, agreed to the terms eight years ago. That's when the trouble began.

"I actually cut a deal which if you can believe it was too wonderful," Shocked said in her

Southwestern twang while calling from New York. "I know it doesn't sound like it makes sense but that's what happened."

According to Shocked, Mercury did not promote her albums and tried to prevent her from recording since they weren't happy with the contract.

After releasing two albums, Shocked offered the label a demo tape three years ago. Mercury rejected the work, claiming it was "stylistically inconsistent." Six months later

she offered a brand-new collection of tunes. That album, *Kind-Hearted Woman*, was rejected for the same reason.

"I just didn't know what to do at the time," Shocked said. "They had me over a barrel since my contract did state that I couldn't be 'stylistically inconsistent' but that was ridiculous. My life was all screwed up. It was so frustrating. I ended up in a private meeting with them and found out they wouldn't promote me because I cut too good a deal for myself. They were disgusted and wouldn't let me out of my contract. I seriously considered leaving the music business."

Last year Shocked extricated herself from the deal, which gave her the rare privilege of retaining the rights to her master tapes.

"They were so furious over that part of the agreement," Shocked said. "The only concession is that Shocked will release a 'best of' collection entitled *Mercury Poise 1988-1995* next year.

After the dust cleared, Shocked inked a non-exclusive contract with Private Music. After a version of it was sold at her concerts last year, *Kind-Hearted Woman* was re-recorded during the spring and officially hit the bins three weeks ago.

The disc is loaded with stark but pretty slices of life. "I'm so

pleased that *Kind-Hearted Woman* is in record stores," Shocked said. "It was frustrating only having it available at the shows I did last year. I'm actually happy with my place in music again."

Shocked, who plays the Theater of Living Arts Friday, hopes to start recording shortly after her tour ends next month.

"I love *Kind-Hearted Woman* but I can't wait to work on some new stuff," Shocked said. "The material on the album was written a while ago (1992) and I'm anxious to record freshly written songs. Don't get me wrong - I'm not complaining. Actually I feel like have a new lease on life. I never thought I would feel this way again."



Main Line Life staff photo - PETE BANNAN
MICHELLE SHOCKED

The TLA is at 334 South Street, Philadelphia. Showtime is 9 p.m. Nov. 8. Call (215) 922-1010 for information.