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EXPRESS MUSIC

Michelle Shocked by singalong sequel



ANCHORED DOWN UNDER: Michelle Shocked

Michelle Shocked shares the story of her odd entry into the music business with **Sophie Tedmanson**

Michelle Shocked's rise to fame began at a folk music festival in Texas many years ago.

She was sitting among friends strumming her guitar and having a quiet singalong when a stranger approached her with a Walkman.

"He asked me to sing one of my songs into his Walkman," she says in her sweet Southern drawl.

"The next thing I knew I received a letter in the mail saying 'You have an album and it's on the charts here in England. Would you like to come over?'"

The lucky break was the start of a highly acclaimed musical career for the Texan folk singer.

"I guess it was a mixed blessing, because there has been a lot of legal problems," Shocked says. "But people are always saying if the guy hadn't done that I wouldn't have been discovered."

"But I don't feel that way, you know. They kinda stole my destiny."

Raised in Texas, Shocked ran away from home as a teenager and became involved with groups seeking rights for squatters and homeless people. Her dedication to the causes meant she was later labelled a protest singer by critics.

"I fancied myself as a political activist or a community organiser or something," Shocked says.

"And people have tried to paint me as a protest singer because there was a political emphasis, but not in my music. It was just in the way I was living my life, stuff I was involved in."

"But then, of course, when I had this job I didn't really feel qualified to speak about the perils of being homeless any more."

Shocked now spends her time writing songs and playing her sassy blend of folk and rock.

In the past few years, she has contributed to a film soundtrack, released a lounge music compilation album and battled with her record company, which she eventually left.

Shocked's latest album is *Good News*, a limited-edition CD she which she will sell only at her shows.

She describes *Good News* as a "taste of things to come". It is an insight into the singer's latest phase, where she is finally doing her own thing.

"This time around I'm here (in Australia) with my band. There are four of us on stage instead of just me, and the direction is one that I wanted to move into about five years ago."

"I encountered a lot of resistance and frustration back then, and rather than give that up I've just been patient. So it really feels like things have come full circle for me."

She says the influences in her music, often described as a fusion of folk, funk, blues and jazz, have become more direct and obvious.

"I guess you'd still call it rhythm and blues," she says, laughing.

Shocked received rave reviews for her recent shows at the Byron Bay Blues Festival.

"People have seen me play on my own and with other bands before, but this time around I'm with my band — and we're truly struttin'."

● Michelle Shocked and the Anointed Earls play at The Metro in George St on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday this week. (Monday and Tuesday are reserved seating shows)