

Michelle shocked

Here's The Good News

IT'S BEEN THREE YEARS since Michelle Shocked last chartered flight across the Pacific to play Australia. Her current expedition sees her venturing into familiar territory. This is her fifth visit to Australia, and the second time she's made the crossing for the East Coast Blues and Roots Festival.

As well as the four-day extravaganza in Byron, Michelle is doing an extended tour of the capitals. Such is her popularity with the well-informed music fan that extra dates have been added in each city. Perhaps it's because we've been made to wait three years since her last tour, something for which she is very apologetic.

Of late though, Michelle Shocked has been taking time away from the music scene, living in New Orleans for the past couple of years. She's spent part of the time weighing up options for her future career: one of the primary motives of the break was to decide what direction to take with future record deals and labels (she's currently unsigned). There, she also immersed herself in music, but not necessarily the jazz one might expect.

Michelle Shocked has found gospel.

"I spent the last year on sabbatical going to church an awful lot," Michelle explains.

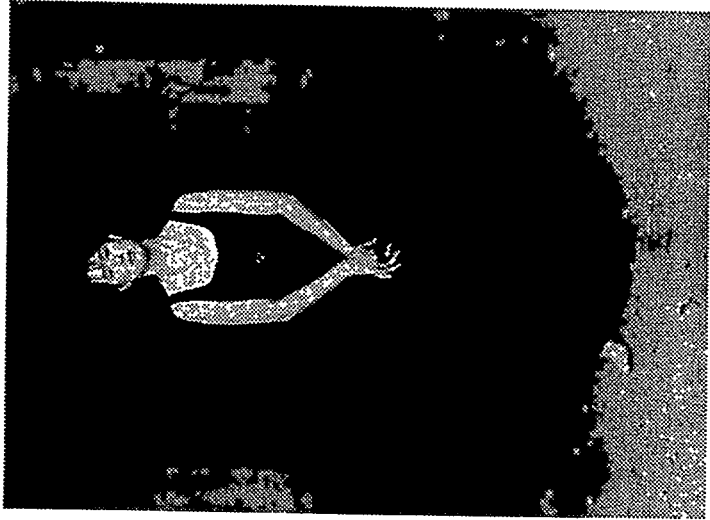
"New Orleans is famous for its jazz culture, particularly its street jazz culture and the first couple of years we were there I definitely sunk myself into it but then I picked up on something that I had started even as far back as 1991-92, when I was living in LA — black gospel.

"It's interesting 'cause you know they have a festival in New Orleans that's famous worldwide called Jazzfest and they bring great jazz and pop artists from all over but invariably you hear people say 'yeah, but the gospel tent really, really got me'. So to be investigating further into black gos-

ing someone, you can talk about all the evil-son of a bitch things you can do in your life but when you want to talk about gospel, that's when they tried to shut me up. The money (US bank bills) says 'In God We Trust'. What's their problem?"

Shocked fans keen to hear her new material can pick up a new limited-edition album, *Good News*, which is only available at shows.

"An album is a bit of an exaggeration," she laughs. "It's a demo; a glorified demo and limited edition at that. I've only printed 2500 copies and when they're gone, they're gone — it's only available at shows. I decided not to go the route of starting my own independent label because I believe that I've got a lot of great work ahead of me that deserves all the resources that a major can



Michelle Shocked - gettin' into gospel

bring to bear but it's just a matter of patiently waiting for the right label to realise this. By the end of the year I realised that I very much wanted to do this work, but I just needed to do it with a peace of mind that can't really be afforded if I'm chasing after the tails of (record) labels and so forth. Instead I've done the very patient and proper thing of an artist and let them come to me. As a result, now there's about 10 or 11 dogs hounding my trail."

Combined with her live work on tour, Michelle says *Good News* is the perfect taste of things to come. Check it out — it could be an enlightening experience.

Michelle Shocked plays the Tivoli Theatre on Tuesday April 14 and Wednesday April 15. *Good News* is only available at her shows.



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