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g energy

...performances from the principals and spirited performances from the large cast make most of the evening pass by in at a lively pace, although the second (and shorter) act

...always enjoy reading them. However, while this "Camelot's" playbill has lots of biography, it lacks either a list of musical numbers or a synopsis of scenes, a serious oversight.

# Gospel music energizes Michelle Shocked

By Natasha Kassulke  
Wisconsin State Journal

## CONCERT REVIEW

It might seem like Michelle Shocked has been silent for a while. It's been years since she cut a new CD or climbed on the tour bus for a long haul around. But the truth is, she's been saving it up.

In fact, the folk-rocker opened the flood gates late last year and wrote 30 songs over 30 days to help usher in 2000.

Fans who crowded The Annex on Wednesday got a strong sampling of those songs and a preview to what Shocked's next CD will sound like.

Shocked's two-hour set with encore featured just a few older songs such as "Anchorage" and centered on the new songs she composed with guitarist Fiachnia O'Braonain (of the Hothouse Flowers) whom she also worked with on past projects such as her "Kind Hearted Woman" CD and "Artists Make Lousy Slaves."

Shocked's respect for O'Braonain shined as she shared her microphone with him. O'Braonain, along three other multi-talented musicians-singers, harmonized with Shocked and billed themselves as her Mood Swingers. Shocked's husband even joined in on accordion for a pair of songs that got as wild as the gospel tent at the New Orleans Jazz and Heritage Festival.

Like cool swings, songs rose and fell throughout the night. It was as if, Shocked noted, she put the songs in a spin cycle to see which ones would last and which ones would fall apart.

Without being preachy, Shocked, 37, showed that her Sunday trips to church have paid off and given her a belief in the ener-

gizing effect of gospel music.

"I'm glad you're here," Shocked told the crowd early on. "But frankly if you weren't, I'd be all right."

While gospel underlies much of her music and message these days, Shocked also works comfortably in blues, reggae, punk, folk, jazz, and funk. Keepers from the collection included a song that Shocked said came from the middle of her forehead and could be a song or a bedtime story.

The feisty "Survival of the Prettiest" paid tribute to her punk side and would have hit home for high school students with lyrics like, "I've seen more compassion in a butcher shop." On another song, she promised a look at her interpretive dance skills: It was a hilarious display of less-than-polished pirouettes.

One seductive love song was delivered in Spanish and came with a Spanish lesson for various terms of intimacy. A bluesy instrumental seemed to borrow from Chris Isaak and inspired couples to swing dance in the door.

Throughout the night, Shocked smiled and sounded sincerely happy. She wore her hair nearly shoulder length and shook it like a shampoo commercial.

But Shocked's talents are not limited to her solid performance, strong and soulful vocals, likable personality, or good taste in a band. She has a gift for delivering music with something behind it. That something? Savoring the magic moments of life and, as her adopted surname implies, expecting the unexpected.

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