

F-8*

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Shocked hits all the right notes

By MARK LEPAGE
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Michelle Shocked is the unlikeliest of heroines.

We already knew that she had been clasped to the collective suffering bosom of the politically correct for her hardscrabble past as well as for her music — rape victim, former mental patient (at the hands of her mother), squatters'-rights advocate and feminist, Shocked makes a perfect repository for the hopes of a certain leftist segment of the collegiate populace.

Half appeal

She also happens to be a hell of a folksinger, and her charisma was half of her appeal.

Even David Letterman was captivated by her: She showed off the *Late Night* baseball jacket the host gave her in exchange for the original lyrics to *Anchorage*.

REVIEW

Michelle Shocked with the Oyster Band and Barry Crimmins at the Spectrum last night.

Shocked cut a waiflike figure onstage, standing solo in her Dylan train-jumper cap and her itchy black clothes, but she captivated an adoring crowd with both her music and her yarn-spinning.

When I Grow Up was a fitting opener, capturing the wistful side of Shocked. Alone onstage, without the band that added punch to the *Short Sharp Shocked* album, she brought a Texas oilwell full of anecdotes about growing up in East Texas and leaving America for better political climes in England.

Shocked's folksiness was both a boon and a drawback to some numbers in the show, occasionally draining intensity from the songs.

However, that folksiness won

out in the long run; Shocked's personable attitude and unadorned, stripped-down acoustic music made the evening the treasure that everyone had expected.

Graffiti Limbo was as spare and affecting as its title, and songs like *Memories of East Texas* and *V.F.D.* were as vivid as they are on record.

Led crowd

Shocked led the crowd in sing-alongs of *Strawberry Jam* and *Midnight Special*, while her own *Black Widow* had implications that were more sympathetic than the recorded version.

But in the end, Shocked herself summed up her musical philosophy, as well as the reason for which she may become an important figure above and beyond the alternative scene. "Music is a lot like politics", she said, "it's too important to be left to professionals."