

MICHELLE SHOCKED

DALLAS BROOKS HALL

Michelle Shocked filled Dallas Brooks Hall with her warm Texan charm. With her guitar, she took to the naked stage and performed with stunning originality.

Shocked's fondness for her hometown was proudly displayed in her *Texan Trilogy* — four (!) tunes of memories about her Texan lifestyle. These songs proved that regardless of this woman's extraordinary life, her heart is still in Texas.

The greatest strength of Shocked's performance was her stage presence. It was quite baffling to see this fragile woman, a guitar and microphone, create such power, humour and emotion.

The highlight of the concert came with the haunting performance of *Graffiti Limbo*, from the *Short, Sharp, Shocked* album. While slowly strumming her guitar, Shocked recounted the



frightening tale of a black American graffiti artist's death while in police custody.

Although Shocked didn't directly talk about politics, her principles came across. It was through her attitude, music, charm and storytelling that the artist injected energy and optimism into the audience.

Most of this optimism emanated from the performance of the tracks from the new album, *Captain Swing*. In her cheeky Texan talk, Shocked introduced *The Greener Side* with the words, "There actually is a greener side. You just gotta figure out which side it is!"

The surprise of the evening came when the accompanying mandolin player proved not only to be incredibly talented but also Shocked's much admired father. In seeing Bill Johnston perform, it was clear that Shocked's musical ability was nurtured by him.

Shocked's versatility as a songwriter and performer was prominent throughout the concert. She moved from screeching down the microphone to soothing the crowd with the blues and almost every other style in-between.

The essence of Michelle Shocked was best depicted in the beautifully plaintive *Anchorage*. Shocked's unique experience of life, music and emotion was projected in her melodic voice as she sang "Ah, just keep on rocking girl", and I'm sure Michelle Shocked will keep on rocking for

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Date

Aw-shucks, no shocks

Rock: First night

Michelle Shocked

Last night, Dallas Brooks Hall
Next concert at Old Greek Theatre,
January 9
Reviewed by Clint Small

IN person Michelle Shocked is the exact opposite of the dour persona portrayed in her publicity photographs.

From the moment she strode on stage and burst into *When I Grow Up*, her rolling eyes and aw-shucks Texan drawl won the audience completely.

By the third song, the reflective *Memories of East Texas*, the audience was singing quietly, as if they were afraid of intruding on the song's delicate melody. Shocked followed up with the rest of her "east Texas trilogy" which was made up of four songs — that's right, four songs — the cheeky swing of *VFD* and *(Making the Run To) Gladewater*, then moved into a selection of songs from her current album, *Captain Swing*.

Shocked brought her father, who also had a mandolin, on stage and together they treated the audience to "an old fiddle tune".

Shocked returned to the guitar and the pair gave a lovely rendition of blues legend Leadbelly's song about how world boxing champion Jack Johnson was stopped from boarding the Titanic because of his color.

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