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Music

Honest night of intimate songs

Michelle Shocked
Old Lion Hotel
Friday night

MICHELLE Shocked adheres to a motto of keeping things simple. She tells her audience that if you've got three chords and something to say, then you've got music. She views a concert to be less than a spectacle and more an opportunity to share the simple music with others.

Standing alone on the stage, armed only with an acoustic guitar, the broad-grinning girl from East Texas successfully seduced a capacity crowd at the Old Lion with the stark simplicity of her pretty tunes and charming stories.

There was nothing formal or fancy about the performance — a skinny girl with a baggy black cap beneath a few spotlights in a rowdy pub certainly isn't a spectacle — but it was captivating for its warmth, humor and intimacy. It was as honest as live music gets.

More importantly, Michelle Shocked delivered the new sound of folk music.

There was definitely too much vigorous hootin' and hollerin' for the songs to be classified along traditional folk lines, but the lusty guitar-strumming and message-laced narratives are straight out of the folk songwriters' handbook.

Michelle started the show with songs which explained her origins and ideology, before launching into choice cuts from her last two albums, *Short Sharp Shocked* and *Captain Swing*.

The songs from *Captain Swing* were especially well executed, with only guitar and voice.

As the tempo built to a full head of steam, a small, bearded man arrived on stage with a mandolin. Michelle asked the audience to welcome her dad, and joined him in a feisty mandolin duet.

The show climaxed with Michelle's most popular songs — *Don't You Mess Around*, *With My Little Sister*, *If Love Was a Train*, *Anchorage* — and concluded with a rollicking jam between Michelle, her dad and support artist Dave Steele.

David Shy