

VARIETY

NEW YORK, NY
WEEKLY 52,000

MAY 16 1990

-7005 BURRELLE'S CC

**Michelle Shocked
Poi Dog Pondering
John Wesley Harding**

New York The Ritz (3,000 seats); \$19.50
top. Promoted by John Scher. Reviewed April
28, 1990.

73508A

■ Folk-rocker Michelle Shocked put on a spirited show at New York's Ritz, blending politics and swing. Mocking her stern radical image, Shocked announced, "I'm through preaching to the converted, it's time to entertain the troops."

With that, Shocked ripped into "Silent Ways," one of the evening's brassy rave-ups from her latest LP, "Captain Swing." Shocked's shaggy, all-male band provided rowdy support, but the focus stayed on the charismatic Shocked who crooned, danced and ranted with tomboyish charm.

Alternating between bluesy polemics ("Graffiti Limbo"), lilting ballads ("Anchorage") and twangy barn-burners ("My Little Sister"), Shocked displayed more range and savvy than most commercially mainstream entertainers. At the same time, her radical message rang out clearly.

Austin band Poi Dog Pondering performed a ragged but endearing set. Their polyrhythmic, hippyish songs were occasionally lumbering, but the set was redeemed by genuine exuberance.

Brit folk-pop balladeer John Wesley Harding opened with a solo acoustic set, seeming tense and distracted. Though his songs showed glimmers of Elvis Costelloesque cleverness, Harding's grim-faced delivery kept the audience loudly indifferent. — Kiss.