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Michelle Shocked in a 21-song performance at the Coach House.

POP MUSIC REVIEW

Shocked Doesn't Retreat; She Still Supplies High Voltage

By JIM WASHBURN

SAN JUAN CAPISTRANO—In switching from her folk-based songs to the seemingly less-confrontational jump-blues pleasures of her current horn-driven "Captain Swing" album, Michelle Shocked has some fans and critics thinking she's abandoned her radical barricades.

At the Coach House Tuesday night, Shocked's overwhelming, life-charged 21-song performance made it clear she's not retreating, just exploring other avenues of liberation. Specifically, her performance asserted, there's no point in manning the front lines unless you've also got your backfield in motion.

Before getting far into her set, the slight, impish singer felt it necessary to justify her recent changes to the audience. She wryly maintained, "It's no secret that political correctness has been a serious social disease for the last several years. . . . Don't make the mistakes I did." In prescribing shaking some booty to Professor Longhair tapes as a cure, she went on to quote radical forbear Emma Goldman: "What good's a revolu-

tion if I can't dance?"

Shocked's flat-out-wonderful, dance-happy music needed no justifying manifesto. Like the glory days of ululant "wop mop a'lu mop" rock, the wild, unfettered spirit of the singer and her six-piece Captain Swing Revue conveyed all the liberation one could ask for.

With some input from her producer, Pete Anderson (who also helms Dwight Yoakam's recordings and is a master guitarist in his own right), Shocked has assembled a monstrously good band, with a stylistic purview ranging from swinging Louis Jordan-influenced jump arrangements to free jazz to rampant rockabilly.

Though Shocked's voice is far from naturally suited to the rigors of a horn-blaring outfit, she pushed her limitations and communicated the crucial life and emotion often missed by more skilled singers.

Sometimes awash in the band's anarchic-but-tight musical melee, her lyrics remained politically incisive—as with the current album's "homeless trilogy" of "God Is a Real Estate Developer," "The Cement Lament" and "Streetcorner Ambassador"—and evocative of

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