

Shocked puts on a rollicking good show

Fellow Arkansans back up singer

By Richard A. Doran
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The only thing missing was the campfire.

From the opening chords of "When I Grow Up" through the closing chords of the encore, Michelle Shocked and the Arkansas Traveler Revue brought to Burlington the best show Memorial Auditorium has seen in some time.

The show featured acts which found their way — in one form or another —

onto Shocked's latest album, "Arkansas Traveler," and presented an appealing conglomeration of sounds. From the younger guitar-oriented Uncle Tupelo to the strong blues majesty of Taj Mahal and the continuing legacy of The Band, the Arkansas revue proved a potent mix.

Shocked had the crowd in the palm of her hand all night. Looking as comfortable as an emcee dressed in weird blue-striped white tights as she does in the quiet confines of the Texas campfires which gave her such an unlikely beginning, Shocked, and a strong back-up marked by guitarist/banjo player Alison Ride, put on a rollicking good country-folk-rock performance that

touched on the very soul of American music itself.

A powerful voice, a vibrant personality and a strong desire to put on a really good show combine in the well-traveled Arkansas native to make her one of the most entertaining individuals rolling up miles on the national tour scene today. In conjunction with the assembled talent that took the stage for the final encore of songs from each act's repertoire, the results can be staggering.

Taj Mahal joined Shocked twice on stage. During her main set he came on for some fine guitar playing on "Jump Jim Crow" and in the encore he took lead vocals for "She Caught the Cady."

The Band churned out a strong set of its own, highlighted by two new songs from an upcoming album and finishing with a couple of classic tunes, "The Shape I'm In" and "Life Is A Carnival." The smooth transition to the 16-person lineup that performed a terrific version of "The Weight" during the encore showed that time and its ravages haven't diminished the tight, hard sound this stalwart of the rock world has always been known for.

The only question that remained was how many in attendance would take Taj Mahal up on his suggestion that "we all go to Ben & Jerry's for a Blues ice cream."