

MICHELLE SHOCKED

OLD LION HOTEL (Mon 7 Dec)

Before a near capacity crowd, effervescent American singer Michelle Shocked (mandolin/guitar) and her three piece bluegrass band (Gary West - bass, Canadian Ray Ligier - mandolin/fiddle and Alison Brown - banjo/guitar), warmed the crowd with homespun philosophies and a batch of good 'ol country tunes. Highlighting much of the material from her latest album, *Arkansas Traveler*, Shocked also treated the audience to several new, as yet un-recorded songs, (*Custom Cropper*, *Stillborn* and *Eddie Bonebreaker*), as well as several old favourites (radio hit *Anchorage*, *V.F.D.* and *Don't You Mess Around With My Little Sister*) from earlier albums.

Highlights of the down home musical evening included a surreal square dance where Shocked, acting as caller, enticed the audience to perform all manner of stunts. Immediately following this bizarre hootenanny, several of the audience were scooped up and taken backstage only to return shortly afterwards to perform an integral part of the song, *Arkansas Traveler*. Basically a nonsensical call and response bluegrass tune, you had to be there to understand what went on. (Call - "Hey farmer, why don't you fix your roof?" Response - "Well, when its raining its too wet to fix it and when its dry I don't need to.") Much fun was had by all!

Shocked respectfully departed centre stage to allow Alison Brown, (widely regarded as one of the worlds top banjo players and also spotted in the foyer following the gig giving an impromptu session to admirers), to perform two of her own tunes from her latest album, *Twilight Motel*. Ray Ligier also performed the jazzy western swing fiddle number, *Panhandle Rag*, from his solo cassette release.

Returning for some half dozen more tunes, Shocked then bid goodnight before the enthusiastic audience brought her back for the obligatory encore. Appropriately ending her 90 minute set with *The Secret To A Long*

Life Is Knowing When It's Time To Go, a rousing five minute stompin' and cheerin' session by the assembled crowd then saw Shocked and Co. happily return to the stage and perform *Blackberry Blossom*. Delightful!

Mention should also be made of support act, Melbourne's Warner Brothers. I missed 'em but Shocked acknowledged 'em for their fine set.

DEE