

# Shocked and reloaded



PHOTO COURTESY OF MICHELLE SHOCKED

*Michelle Shocked, the altna-folk icon of the 80s, is back – and recharged!*

**BY SUE ZALOKAR**  
STAFF WRITER

**M**ichelle Shocked doesn't fit into any category, really, except genuine. She hails from East Texas – a self-proclaimed hillbilly with the requisite degree in the oral interpretation of literature. Having traveled the world as a military brat turned “skateboard punk-rocker” turned folk icon turned student of gospel music turned born-again fundamentalist Christian, she continues to shock her followers into reality as if to say, “This is who I am. Be who you are.”

At 16, she ran away from home and became a troubadour, residing in squats in Amsterdam and San Francisco. She was arrested for protesting at the 1984 Democratic National Convention in San Francisco (the photo of her arrest became the cover for her album, “Short Sharp Shocked”). In 1986, Shocked met English

music-executive wannabe, Pete Lawrence at the Kerrville Folk Festival in Texas. He pulled out a Sony cassette player, recorded the session, returned to England and there released the bootleg album, “The Texas Campfire Sessions” without Shocked’s knowledge. Shocked learned months later that she was on the charts in England. In January of 1987, Shocked performed her very first professional gig at the Queen Elizabeth Hall in London.

Shocked signed with Mercury Records in the late 80s and released three albums on the label. The relationship ended in a bitter lawsuit against the corporate machinery, with Shocked retaining full ownership of her songs.

In 2010, she launched Roadworks, an ongoing, 5-year touring project. This month she will “Roccupy” Portland at Mississippi Studios on April 27.

**Sue Zalokar:** *You have said, “I can’t tell you where I am going – as an artist – but I can tell you where I come from.” Where do you come from?*

**Michelle Shocked:** I was a runaway when I was 16. Unlike a lot of runaways, I finished school. You know, I didn’t really run away. I was kicked out, I was thrown away and I think that is something that a lot of people – people caught up in that cycle of homelessness experiences – feel. Your self esteem takes such a mortal blow. You cannot find a single, solid piece of ground to stand on to have any sense of worth that you even deserve the shelter everybody needs. It’s a downward spiral. A lot of people self-medicate, not everybody...I did. But when I finally found a politically active community of squatters in San Francisco, it gave me just enough of a foothold to realize that I wasn’t in this thing alone – that

what I was dealing with many other people were dealing with.

I lived in Amsterdam and squatted there, in a fairly liberal economy, it was a revelation to me that it was decriminalized to be homeless. It was like, you weren’t a criminal because you were poor. And when the city and the national government helped its youth, it basically was creating a safety net for them to say, “well they’ve got to live somewhere”. So we had an entire economy built around squats. We had squat cafes and restaurants, even a squat barber shop. I was working with a pirate radio station that was in a squat. So because we didn’t have to struggle with sheer survival, we had the luxury of organizing ourselves into a collective that was very productive and very positive and really helped me to get a foothold. I never forgot that experience. And then shortly after that, I found out that

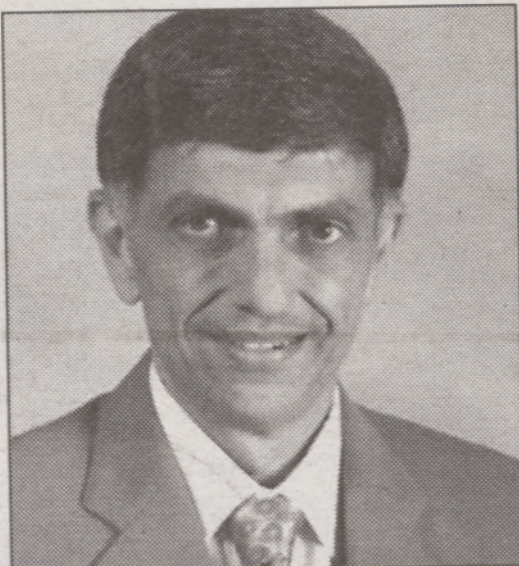
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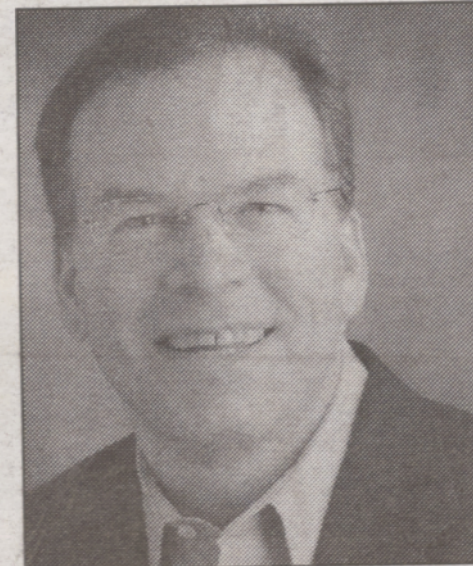
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