



This is a great comeback album. Not that Michelle Shocked ever went away, but since her triumph over the recording industry in the 90's which won her total control of her catalog, the new albums she's put out have fallen short of the expectations her first three major label releases established. It almost made you wish she would go back to Mercury records to record an album as good as "Short Sharp Shocked", "Captain Swing", and "Arkansas Traveler." The new cd "Don't Ask Don't Tell" is that album.

Maybe it just took her awhile to get her bearings straight in the new independent landscape she is trailblazing. This album has the polish and eclecticism that the four albums that came before lacked. It combines for the first time all the elements of those three landmark albums she recorded at the beginning of her career. There's folk and country styles in the songs "Early Morning Saturday" and "Elaborate Sabotage", blues in "Used Car Lot", rocking songs like "How You Play The Game" (featuring a hilarious over the top Dylan impression) and "Fools Like Us", a spoken word story song called "Don't Ask" and New Orleans styled jazz tunes like "Hardly Gonna Miss Him" (referring to her recent divorce) and "Goodbye." Shocked has always employed great musicianship, but where her last few albums were stark, these performances are full-bodied and brimming in humor, joy and emotionalism.

This album was released with two others on the same day called "Got No Strings" and "Mexican Standoff" which are more genre oriented than this style jumping masterpiece, but when you are your own boss you can pretty much do what you want. As the last track "Hi Skool" comes to a crashing conclusion, Michelle can be heard to exclaim "Oh My Gawd!!" You'll probably have the same reaction.