died on her instrument between songs and only moved to amble aimlessly out of the spotlight, was generally lost on the big stage. House lighting was used sparingly to add a little color to the presentation only four or five times during the whole act. Chapman's voice and songs were the only draw. But, gauging from crowd reaction, she was preying to the choir.

A brief shower an hour before the show likely muted any walk-up traffic. But Chapman's refusal to promote her own tour by talking to the press probably didn't help the turnout, either.

South African act Johnny Clegg & Savuka, promoting their Capitol Records disc "Cruel, Crazy, Beautiful World," played a tight and danceable set. Clegg's act is visually entertaining, if didactic. The crowd, though, was Chapman's.

CHRIS THOMAS

Talby's Blues Bar & Heritage Hall
Baton Rouge, La.

This WAS not your typical venue for a major-label showcase, but it was definitely a successful homecoming for Chris Thomas, who debuted material from his new Hightone/Sign/Reprieve release, "Cry Of The Profits," May 4 in this matching-size club owned by Thomas' father—Talby—a noted Louisiana blues artist himself. However, while Thomas came up surrounded by blues, he has absorbed several other styles during his metamorphosis. In fact, the only traditional blues Thomas and his four-piece group covered was a medley of "Five Long Years/Hoochie Coochie Man/Mannish Boy," obviously in tribute to the downtown setting.

High-energy rock and soul was more Thomas' forte on this evening, as he excelled at the choppy set opener, "Heart And Soul," and "Last Real Man," complete with its funky Memphis chord changes. Another cooker was "All Night Long," very much a psychological version of John Lee Hooker's "Boogie Children."

Already being compared with Jimi Hendrix, Thomas enhanced the musical parallel by playing dead-on covers of "Little Wing" and "Hey Joe." Original songs that belied Hendrix's influence included the spirited "Wanna Die With A Smile On My Face" and the moody "Alpha Omega."

Thomas displayed an introductory side on "Help Us Somebody," a soulful song that contains his personal views concerning today's social climate. It might have been the strongest performance of the evening.

Thomas is an artist with a promising career on the horizon. It will be interesting to see which audiences—blues, rock, urban—embraces his music first.

JEFF HANNSCHE

(Continued on next page)

NEW YORK-AREA PR FIRM SENDS SHOCK WAVES THRU MUSIC BIZ

(Continued from preceding page)

er SBK Records acts and the likes of Peter Murphy, D-Mob, Richard Barone, The Th, Katrina & the Waves, and Kenny Loggins. She now shares Joel's account with Shore Fire Media, the PR firm formed by former Columbia Records press VP Marilyn Lavert.

Shock says her diverse clients reflect her eclectic tastes and independence, which during her label days were stifled by corporate decisions about which acts to push and which to let sit on the back burner.

"It gets to be so frustrating to love something and not be able to spend time on it because the company's priorities were with something else," she says. "Now I can choose to work with people whose work I really like; that's the only criterion for whom Shock Ink represents."

Shock Ink has worked with O'Connor since "The Lion And The Cobra." Now, with the chart-topping, double-platinum breakthrough of "I Do Not Want What I Haven't Got" and the No. 1 success of "Nothing Comes 2 U," O'Connor has vindicated Shock's contention that "there's no reason to limit so-called alternative artists to the usual kinds of exposure in the alternative media, hoping the mainstream picks it up."

That strategy hardly ever works, according to Shock. "I wanted to get Sinedra all the press I could, wherever I could."

"It was extraordinary the job Elaine Shock did with the press," says Nigel Grange, who signed O'Connor to Ensign Records in the U.K. He attributes the success of O'Connor's debut by the band Isla. Shock Ink helped create.

Billy Joel demanded a different publicity tack. Critics certainly heard of him but many either yawned at or actively attacked his music. "I had to convince people to be fair," says Shock, whose husband, Jeff Shock, is creative director of Joel's management company, Atlantic Music. "He puts on a terrific show, but critics usually just pan his album, although 'Nylon Curtains' got good reviews. So even though I only got called to work on 'Storm Front' about three weeks before its release—which is nowhere near enough time—I pushed hard to get people to give it a serious listen and come out for his shows."

"I wanted that ripple effect: a couple of good early reviews in visible places that would hopefully make other people pay more attention."

Here again she seems to have succeeded. The New York Times and Rolling Stone both gave "Storm Front" solidly favorable reviews. Shock also drew press from the attention high school educators gave to Joel's history-monging single "We Didn't Start The Fire."

"I've never had to go sell myself to anybody, which is a good thing, because I'm useless doing that. I'm not really any good at it," says Shock. "So I don't really have a game plan for the future. It depends on who calls me, and with whom I'll decide if they do and want to work with them."

"Right now," she says, gesturing around her cramped office, "I just want to take over the office next door so we can all have room to work."

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