

‘I will comfort you’

With new songs to sing, Pat & Tex LaMountain come to The Shea

It’s a cool November day but warm and cozy inside Pat and Tex LaMountain’s kitchen. The fire is burning, the tea kettle is on and the conversation flows easily. The members of this husband and wife singer-songwriting team have such a sense of genuineness about them that one can’t help but feel warm and comfortable in their presence.

Come to think of it, that is the same feeling that one gets from listening to their music.

They recently released a new CD, “Rivers, Roads & Bridges.” It is their eighth release on Greenfield’s Garden Gate Recordings and Pat and Tex will celebrate both Thanksgiving and the release of the new disc with a show held at The Shea Theater on Sunday, Nov. 23, at 3 p.m.

Pat and Tex have delighted local audiences with their folk-based music for over four decades. The couple first met in Montague in 1974 when Tex was a member of the band Clean Living, the pioneering country rock band that helped put the western Massachusetts music scene on the map. Pat was working with the Sawmill River Band and the two started singing together soon after. They were married in 1980 and settled in Greenfield, where they continue to live. But even with almost 40 years of singing, writing, performing and harmonizing together, they haven’t lost the passion for what they do.

The new disc was two years in the making, interrupted in part by a three-month trip the couple took out west. They also spent time producing a series of concerts with Robin and Linda Williams that were benefits for the Source to Sea cleanup project.

For the first time in their lengthy career, Pat and Tex worked with an outside producer on the recording of “Rivers, Roads & Bridges.” “We had been talking about having a producer for umpteen years and we did a couple of gigs with Anand Nayak,” said Tex.

“He came over and heard us play and from the start he had all these suggestions. It turned out that we worked really well together.”

Nayak is best known for his work as the guitarist for Rani Arbo & daisy mayhem, but in recent years he has become an in-demand producer.

And instead of recording at their home studio, Pat and Tex recorded the majority of the disc at Sonelab studios in Easthampton.

Performing on the disc are the LaMountain’s regular backing musicians: drummer Rick Mauran and bass player John White. They also had some special guests on this project — fiddlers Zoe Darrow (Fiddleheads, Gaslight Tinkers), Chris Brashear (Robin and Linda Williams), Jerry Noble (of the Smith College staff) on piano, and Nayak on guitars, banjo, mandolin and more. All of the musicians who performed on the CD will perform at the Nov. 23 show at The Shea.

When you have two musicians who both play acoustic guitar, people automatically think “folk music.” And while Pat and Tex are very much folk, when you listen to the 12 tracks on this disc you will hear a waltz, some bluegrass, swing, country and even gospel music.

“Rivers, Roads & Bridges” opens with a song that Tex wrote (the duo write both separately and together) called

“I Will Comfort You,” a mid-tempo folk song that features some nice acoustic guitar work and the blending of the couple’s voices. *“Let your dreams slip through/Let the unexpected follow and be/Taken by surprise/The eyes are watching you/And, though you may have fallen/ As quickly you may rise/ I will comfort, I will comfort you.”*

“I think that song just sets the tone of the disc,” said Pat. “In fact, I think it is the theme of the disc.”

Pat and Tex write heartwarming, honest songs that do exude a sense of comfort. Many of these songs are set here in Franklin County and while on the surface they do, indeed, mention rivers, roads and bridges, they also impart valuable life-lessons and impressions from the journey Pat and Tex have experienced together.

Some explore simple, everyday events. We can all relate to getting stuck behind a slow driving tractor (“Tractor State of Mind”), or enjoying a country fair in Vermont (“Tumbridge Fair”). Others are more of a more reflective natures, such as “Precious Love,” which explores the ups and downs of an enduring relationship.

The couple included two cover songs on the new disc including “Slip Away,” which was written by Russ Thomas of Greenfield. Among their own tunes, the song that seems to get the strongest reaction is “Down the River (Old Blue),” which chronicles the loss of the couple’s camp in Hawley during Tropical Storm Irene.

“This song gets lots of response,” said Tex. “I don’t know if it is because it is about an actual event that happened here or if it is just the story.”

The song has an upbeat melody and a sing-along chorus and a touch of humor as they sing about all they lost in the storm.

“The basketball was heading for Springfield/And the Hall of Fame/ The lawn mower ended on its back like a turtle,” and so it goes. The song is a lighthearted look at a serious subject that impacted many people in our community.

“You have to look at it that way,” exclaimed Pat. “It’s who we are.

The river has every right to take our things. Besides, now I don’t have to worry about fixing that place up anymore,” she added with a laugh.

Pat and Tex are longtime social activists who in recent years have been more involved in various concerts to benefit the Connecticut Watershed Council. (Pat retired as finance director of the Watershed Council last year). In the 1970s, when working with the band Bright Morning Star, their songs included “No Nukes” and “Karen Silkwood,” which became anthems for the area’s strong anti-nuclear movement. But they also led to Pat and Tex being pigeonholed as protest singers, a label they found limiting and not easy to shake.

“We spent years trying to get rid of the ‘No Nukes duo’ moniker and spent a lot of energy not doing political songs on purpose,” explained Pat.

“We will touch on issues in our songs now, but not be so direct like we used to be,” said Tex. “The music of ‘Rivers, Roads & Bridges’ is where we are at now. We aren’t breaking new territory, we aren’t out to be stars, but we love to play.” Like most area musicians, the LaMountain’s lament over the limited number of places to play, yet they have managed to perform with some regularity. Every summer, you’ll find them playing at the COOP concerts at the Energy Park (they have been members of the cooperative since 2003), and they love playing at the Greenfield Farmers Market.

“I look around when we are playing at places like the farmers market and people are very soothed and they are very content,” said Pat. “It looks like a little church and I think our music is helpful for people. I want them to

take that away from this new album.”

You can hear these new songs and some old favorites, too when Pat and Tex take the stage at The Shea this weekend with this lineup of great talent. They are thrilled to share the stage with all these talented musicians for what they view as a once-in-a-lifetime event.

Tex even promises to break out his shiny new gold Gibson guitar.

So, get a head start on the holiday season and treat yourself to this special Sunday afternoon show.

www.patandtex.com The Shea Theatre is located at 71 Avenue A in Turner falls.

Tickets are \$15 and available at www.BrownPaperTickets.com, at World Eye Bookshop, 156 Main St., Greenfield, or at the door. You can purchase “Rivers, Roads & Bridges” at the show for the special price of \$5.

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Submitted photo



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