

# Russell a storyteller with many styles

**T**om Russell sings of historical figures and famous sports heroes. He sings of days gone by and lost love. Mostly, like a drifting novelist, his music connects to regions in which he's lived.

The El Paso, Texas-based singer/songwriter and producer whose style varies from folk to country to cowboy music, makes his way to New England on Saturday, performing at the Rose Garden Coffeehouse in Mansfield. Joining Russell will be extraordinary guitarist Andrew Hardin.

The pair produced Russell's latest CD, "Modern Art" (Hightone Records, www.hightone.com), a collection of some Russell favorites, like Michael Smith's "The Dutchman," Nanci Griffith's "Gulf Coast Highway" (she sings backup on several tracks, including that one) and a touch of Warren Zevon's "Carmelita."

Russell set the bar high with his earlier albums. Folklorist John Lomax called 1999's "The Man From God Knows Where," about the immigrant

## CONCERT PREVIEW

### TOM RUSSELL

At the Rose Garden Coffeehouse, 8 p.m. Saturday. Doors open at 7:30. The coffeehouse is in the Orthodox Congregational Church, 17 West St., Mansfield. \$15. Call 508-699-8122; www.rosegardenfolk.com.

experience, "one of the most important folk records ever recorded."

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"Late Night with David Letterman," with Griffith singing harmony backup.

In his online diary (www.tomrussell.com), Russell bids farewell to Warren Zevon and Johnny Cash: "The passing of Johnny Cash shook me; he was a one of a kind

singer, writer and human being. We had worked with him several times and he always went out of his way to be kind. He recorded my song 'Veteran's Day,' and rumor has it that he also recently recorded 'Blue Wing.' I hope it surfaces."

On "Modern Art," Russell plays the storyteller. As former Yankees slugger Mickey Mantle in the song, he reflects about his career and life. Likewise, he captures the struggles, sassiness and fortitude of boxing great "Muhammad Ali," set to a rollicking calypso rhythm and familiar chorus: "Float like a butterfly, sting like a bee / My name is Muhammad Ali."

The title track is a reflection of Russell's own life, born post World War II, as he sings of bread costing a dime, the Truman White House and sneaking into Beatles concerts. Though mostly cast in folk and country music stylings, he gives a nod to George Gershwin and greats of another musical era in "The Boy Who Cried Wolf."

— STEPHEN IDE  
The Patriot Ledger



Tom Russell plays the Rose Garden Coffeehouse on Saturday night.