

by Luis Torres Correspondent

When broadcast journalist Dan Blackburn told the singing duo Bettman and Halpin that he wanted to produce a documentary film about them, they told him: "But you know we're not famous." And Blackburn replied that he hoped after the film is seen, they will be.

We shall see. Stephanie Bettman and Luke Halpin have their fingers crossed. They are hoping the broadcast of the documentary titled "It All Comes Back to Love Tour" will be the catalyst that will boost their careers and open doors of opportunity.

"We're very excited about his and grateful for the opportunity the airing of this film represents," Bettman said. "We have our hopes up, but whatever happens happens."

The film, which will air on KCET at 8 p.m. Wednesday, provides an intimate look at the lives and artistic work of these two musicians who have been gaining popularity steadily since they came together six years ago. Their roots are in Southern California, particularly the San Gabriel Valley.

Bettman, after forays into such careers as trapeze and circus in her youth, decided even years ago to dedicate herself to her first artistic love — music. She's a fiddler, singer and songwriter. She is as a captivating voice and a mesmerizing stage presence.

She was soon joined by Halpin, a musician who excels at mandolin guitar and fiddle. There is a certain fortitude evident in his meticulous work on the man-



Courtesy photo Spontaneity and playfulness characterize the performances of Stephanie Bettman and Luke Halpin, and yet they tell haunting stories through original songs; their music evokes emotions and memories that resonate with their audiences.

dolin or guitar onstage. Audiences often mouth the word "wow" after some pristine picking.

Playing thousands of gigs in small, informal venues throughout the country has made them proficient and "tight" as a duo.

Spontaneity and playfulness characterize their performances, and yet they tell haunting stories through original songs; their music evokes emotions and memories that resonate with their audiences.

Bettman and Halpin music is a mix of blues, bluegrass, folk and contemporary ballads with tinges of country.

"We call it Americana. If we're forced to try to categorize the music we play," Bettman said. There seems to be some-

thing of a renaissance of folk-rooted acoustic music sweeping the country, and Bettman and Halpin are part of that movement. They say it's been a fun journey, even with the inevitable little hardships and obstacles they've had to deal with along the way.

They do everything themselves. They don't have booking agents, managers, publicists, accountants and lawyers. Maybe after they "break through" — which may happen soon — they'll need a legion of assistants. But right now, they book their own shows, they produce their own CDs and they make their own arrangements on the road. Truth be told, they often "rely on the kindness of strangers" and flop on living room couches instead of

staying at the nearest Holiday Inn or Best Western motel.

"We just enjoy performing," Halpin said.

He's been playing music professionally since he was about 9 years old.

"My first gig was at the Fourth of July picnic in South Pasadena at Garfield Park, and I still remember it well," he said.

His family has been in South Pasadena for generations.

"My uncle painted the Garfield Park sign," he said with a laugh.

In elementary school, he learned to play mandolin and quickly became a member of the family band. He joined his father, mother and brother in a band called the Phancy Clan Band. "We played some bluegrass

**IT ALL COMES BACK TO LOVE TOUR**  
8 p.m. Wednesday  
KCET Channel 28

stuff and then some Merle Haggard kind of stuff," Halpin said. "Later, when I was in my 20s, I still performed with my parents — Phil and Nancy Halpin — as the Halpin Trio."

Halpin has fond memories of growing up in South Pasadena, which he says was a bit like something out of a Norman Rockwell Saturday Evening Post cover.

"My grandfather lived near that great library building in South Pasadena," says Halpin. "I remember playing around there and going down Mission and stopping for candy and talking to people. Everybody was friendly; those are great memories."

Like Bettman, Halpin looks at the airing of the documentary about them on KCET as something that could boost their careers.

"Sure, we hope it'll give us more exposure and encourage more people to check out what we do," he said.

Bettman says she's trying to keep all of this in perspective.

"Yes, we have ambitions," she said. "But it's all about who you are as a person and not about somebody else's definition of success."

She says she hopes people who watch the film on KCET will want to find out more about the music of Bettman and Halpin.

"I'd like those viewers to say, 'I like them and I want more.'"

# PASADENA STAR