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Miranda Grubbs

Mallory Lewis performs with Lamb Chop at the Panhandle-South Plains Fair Monday.

Puppet performs at South Plains Fair with Mallory Lewis, Shari Lewis' daughter

If you thought Lamb Chop was tucked away in an attic or propped up in a museum, think again.

Posted: September 29, 2010 - 12:25am

By Sarah Nightingale

If you thought Lamb Chop was tucked away in an attic or propped up in a museum, think again.

The puppet sheep is alive, kicking, and feistier than ever. You can see for yourself at the South Plains Fair.

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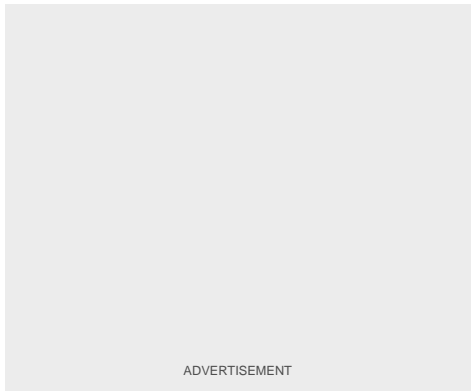
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Of course, Lamb Chop has a different helper. When creator Shari Lewis died

of pneumonia in 1998, her daughter Mallory wondered what to do with the nation's favorite sheep.

"I was pregnant when mom died," said Mallory, who was head writer for Lamb Chop's PBS television show. "I realized if I didn't do Lamb Chop, my son would never know her."

On stage, Lamb Chop has her own interpretation of events: "She only got the job because she's in the family," the sheep quipped.

Close your eyes, though, and Mallory's Lamb Chop sounds just like Shari's.

"I think how you sing is a function of your vocal chords — it's genetic," Mallory said.

The South Plains Fair is Lamb Chop's Lubbock debut, but the duo travels to shows across the country, Mallory said.

"A sheep is always happy to be in Cotton Country," Lamb Chop said.

Shows are 3:30 p.m., 5 p.m., and 8 p.m. on weekdays and 4, 5 and 8 p.m. on Saturday at the outdoor stage. The act is a contemporary version of Shari's original show, which makes Lamb Chop seem even livelier than she did on TV.

"Lamb Chop is a bit of a drama Queen," Mallory admits.

"I am not," retorted her puppet.

But the backchat, singing and jokes soon win the hearts of kids who didn't grow up with Lamb Chop. For the first time, Mallory is also working with Hush Puppy, Lamb Chop's TV sidekick.

"Hush Puppy is like an opening Act," said Lamb Chop, in case there's any dispute. "I mean, he's good, but I'm great."



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It's the generation that remembers Shari that makes Lamb Chop most excited to be performing 12 years after she died, she said.

"I like to see the old people who watched me when they were little," Lamb Chop said. "They ask me how I still look so good and I tell them I have a fantastic seamstress."

Among the audience Monday afternoon was Lubbock resident Dan Stevenson, who watched Lamb Chop in the 1960s. He's glad Mallory took the reins, he said.

"I was a fan of her mom and now I'm a fan of her," he said. "A lot of new entertainment is electronic. This is great because it's person-to-person."

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Great story

By William Kerns | 09/29/10 - 06:10 pm

I had originally planned to talk with Mallory, too, but I had a hunch that Sarah would be more skilled at bringing Lambchop and the spirit of Shari Lewis into this story via a girl-to-girl chat.

"fantastic seamstress" ... now that's funny, and I'm not sure Lambchop would have trusted me with that one-liner.

That said, when I first asked fair general manager Herb Higgs about Mallory, he gave me the impression that Lambchop dominated their conversation...

I will say that I loved watching Shari Lewis when I was just a child, I hate thinking of her succumbing to pneumonia, and I still plan to make a special effort to take my family to see Mallory perform before the fair ends Saturday.

Nice job, Sarah.



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