

## 'Companion' fans can enjoy reruns

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Radio stations across the nation will broadcast the last live episode of "A Prairie Home Companion" on Saturday, but audiences can still enjoy reruns of the program's early shows.

At KUOP Stockton-Modesto (91.3 FM), which carries the program locally, acting station manager Dennis Easter says he expects to rebroadcast for at least a year. Host and creator Garrison Keillor produced the show in Minneapolis for seven years before it was picked up by American Public Radio, and few of those early shows have been heard by national audiences.

Still, some people in the industry say that the end of live broadcasts from mythical Lake Wobegon could leave public radio managers singing the financial blues.

"'Prairie Home' means money to the 279 public radio stations that carry it," writes analyst Gary Cummings in the Washington Journalism Review. "Many of those stations, which live hand-to-mouth, have found 'Prairie Home' a financial godsend. Nationally, more money is raised by individual public stations from listeners to 'Prairie Home Companion' than any other public-radio program."

At WBEZ in Chicago, for example, about 25 percent of lis-

tener contributions are linked to the show.

The impact at KUOP isn't expected to be that great.

Of the station's estimated yearly budget of \$350,000, Easter says, about a third is generated through pledges — and only about 10 percent of those pledges are tied to the show.

Although the show will no longer be broadcast live, Easter doesn't expect to lose either audience or pledge dollars.

"One reason it's so popular is the live element," he notes. "But the content itself is its strength. The entertainment factor is just as good."

Because membership in American Public Radio, which distributes "Prairie Home Companion," costs about \$5,000 and airing "Prairie Home" costs an additional \$5,000, Easter notes, the show has virtually paid for itself in the past. With reruns, which mean no newer production costs, he expects those fees to be lower.

"It'll continue to air as long as American Public Radio provides ('Prairie Home') to us," he says.

For cable television viewers, the last episode of "Prairie Home Companion" also can be seen on The Disney Channel at 9 p.m. Saturday. In Modesto, The channel is part of the new, expanded Post-Newsweek Cable system.