


Garrison Keillor will be no-show at Radio Hall of Fame induction



Noel Holston
Radio

For a minute there, it seemed certain that Garrison Keillor would be joining the ranks of such radio legends as Jack Benny, Arthur Godfrey and Lowell Thomas. Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications announced that the creator and star of "A Prairie Home Companion" would be inducted into its Radio Hall of Fame at a black-tie ceremony Nov. 6.

Now it appears that Keillor will be joining a more exclusive club of performers, such as Marlon Brando, George C. Scott and Bill Cosby, who have declined to accept major awards for their work.

Unless Keillor changes his mind, he'll be a no-show in Chicago. Asked for a comment about his Hall of Fame induction, he faxed a handwritten note in which he said he isn't worthy of the honor because he doesn't meet "the surest sign of true quality": He has never been fired from a radio job.

He said he suspects that the notice from the Hall of Fame is "a hoax of some sort," probably perpetrated by "Prairie Home Companion" truck driver Russ Ringsak.

"He has been known to do these things before," Keillor wrote. "If I went to Chicago for the induction, I'd probably find that the address of the Hall is a parking lot by the Chicago River, and there'd be Ringsak, parked in a Peterbilt, pulling on the airhorn. So I'm staying home."

I'm sure Keillor is being totally frank. I'm sure it has nothing to do with his fabled shyness or with the fact that Rush Limbaugh got voted in last year.

The induction show will go on, with or without Lake Wobegon's quirkiest son. About 100 radio stations nationwide will broadcast the ceremony. Charles Osgood of CBS Radio will be the host, and Don Fardo will be the announcer. Minnesota Public Radio spokeswoman Ginger Suco said MPR hasn't been approached about carrying the broadcast.

This year's other inductees are comedian Red Skelton, Los Angeles talk-show personality Gary Owen (best known as the "Laugh-In" announcer), "The Burns and Allen Show" and radio innovator Gordon McLendon, who dreamed up the Top-40 and "Beautiful Music" formats.

The inductees were chosen via a poll of about 5,000 radio executives, broadcast historians and Radio Hall of Fame members. The honors are administered by Chicago's Museum of Broadcast Communications, which offers exhibits about radio, TV and broadcast advertising and contains a public archive of more than 50,000 hours of radio programming, 8,000 hours of TV and 3,000 commercials. For more information, call (312) 629-6000.