

Keillor charms at State Fair

By David Lindquist

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Garrison Keillor explored themes of women, nostalgia and community Wednesday at the Indiana State Fair, where he sang and conversed in the relaxed format of his radio show, "A Prairie Home Companion."

The local stop on Keillor's "Rhubarb Tour" (the plant is a secret of the good life, we learned) isn't scheduled for broadcast. But the Minnesota native turned in an excellent performance just the same.

Keillor devoted the opening segment of the 2½-hour show to yesteryear's rock 'n' roll, which provided a direct conduit to the fairer sex.

With no better place to start than the Beatles, Keillor smoothly introduced a rendition of "In My Life" by mentioning the Fab Four's appearance at the same Grandstand in 1964.

He sang the tune as a duet with angelic accomplice Prudence Johnson, with both voices thriving in high register.

Keillor also finessed Jerry Lee Lewis' "Great Balls of Fire," a song that illustrates the urges of a young man.

Young ladies — a quartet of fair queens — joined him onstage later for some harmless flirting, and even Meryl Streep earned mention as one of Keil-



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Witty wordplay: Garrison Keillor sang tunes of yesteryear's rock 'n' roll and doled out sharp commentary Wednesday during his "A Prairie Home Companion" tour at the Indiana State Fair.

CENTER STAGE

'A Prairie Home Companion' tour

Where: Indiana State Fairgrounds

Bottom line: An evening of late-summer bliss

lor's latter-day infatuations.

Though he and Streep are two principals in an upcoming film based on "A Prairie Home Companion," Keillor hasn't gone Hollywood.

The program featured sharp commentary on "decency" crackdowns possibly coming to the airwaves. Keillor and sound-effects master Fred Newman ad-libbed a farcical tale of Indianapolis under siege, only to conclude that new guidelines would allow the depiction of an exploding boy but not let him be frightened to the point of urination.

Meanwhile, the show's intermission wasn't an intermission at all. Instead, it was a nifty exercise in togetherness.

Keillor called on everyone to stand and sing three songs: "America the Beautiful," "Amazing Grace" and "Can't Help Falling in Love."

Encapsulating his pleasant demeanor, he walked into the audience — in "poor light," as he said — to lead a choir that wasn't singing for its own fame or fortune or the adulation of a celebrity.

The motives were liberty, faith and love.

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