


OWN STYLE WITH ELSA KLENSCH 1.05 ENTERTAINMENT THIS WEEK Web (1973) Animated.

## 'Home Companion' TV debut



**Garrison Keillor**

NEW YORK (AP) — "A Prairie Home Companion" made its television debut last night and Garrison Keillor hopes no one was unnerved by what they saw.

"I hope the disappointment would be brief, brief but intense, and that would be the low point of the show when they first look at me," he said. "It can only go up from there."

Saturday's edition of the radio show, a big hit in the small pond of public broadcasting ratings, was taped for airing later that night on public television. Some American Public Radio affiliates carried a delayed simulcast instead of having the show at its usual hour.

The broadcast celebrated the grand reopening of the World Theater in St. Paul, Minn., which is the show's permanent home.

Musicians Butch Thompson and Peter Ostrowski were there, with the commercials for Powder-milk Biscuits and Bertha's Kitty Boutique, and the news of another quiet week in Lake Wobegon. Guests include Chet Atkins, Johnny Gimble and Jean Redpath.

Given the stern things Keillor has had to say about television, it's surprising to find him facing the cameras.

"I could count on one finger the things that I've watched," he said. That included one quarter of the Super Bowl, which served an introduction to America for his new wife, a native of Denmark.

"I have lost track of whatever grudge I used to hold against TV," he said. "To me, it's a clean slate."

In a way, the show repays a debt to Suzanne Weill, senior vice president for programming at PBS.

"She was the person who put me on stage for the first time in my life, doing a reading at the Walker Arts Center (in Minneapolis), I believe about 1971 or 2," Keillor said. "So, she'd been trying to talk me into this, and eventually it sounded exciting."

The World Theater has 1,000 seats, 700 fewer than the Orpheum Theater where the show had been camped during restoration. Even in the Orpheum, there was a two-month wait for tickets.

"So the TV show is a way, I suppose, for a lot of people to see the show — and a way for me to look at it," Keillor said. "I've never seen it, and I'm curious about it, as anybody would be."

He planned no changes in the two-hour format just for the cameras.

"I don't have a mind for visual things. I'm a writer. Writers' imaginations are entirely in their ears," he said.

So he saw nothing wrong, a couple of weeks ago, with putting a woodcarver on the show.

"I thought people might be able to imagine him, and would enjoy whatever picture they have in their minds, more than seeing him," Keillor said.

"Over the course of a couple of hours, he made a nice mess. The carving he came up with was nice, but I think it was better in your imagination."

"A Prairie Home Companion" started in 1974 as a local show and didn't go national until 1980. It now reaches 3 million to 4 million listeners a week, making it the highest-rated program on public radio.

Keillor is also at work on a sequel to "Lake Wobegon Days," now in its 34th week on the New York Times Best seller list. "I hope my second book will be man-tempered and cruel," he said. "I don't like to get a reputation for being a mellow person. It means a lot of people call up and ask you for favors."

He was on the cover of Time, and now on TV. Is that too much fame for a shy person?

"Well, it's on PBS you know, it's not quite like being on CBS," he said.