https://www.newspapers.com/image/175851177



Guitarist Chet Atkins and raconteur Garrison Keillor, an unlikely but compatible team.

Chet Atkins, Garrison Keillor Bite Into Some 'Sweet Corn'

By DIRK SUTRO

Just about everyone has heard of Garrison Keillor—"A Prairie Home Companion," "Lake Wobegon" and expert storyteller.

And just about everyone has heard of Chet Atkins—silky smooth guitar phenom revered by fans of jazz, country and rock alike.

But not everybody knows that the two have teamed up for an 18-city U.S. tour in something called "The Sweet Corn Show." It is coming to Humphrey's Concerts by the Bay for two sold-out shows Tuesday night.

The on-stage collaborations with Keillor Bay for two sold-out shows Tuesday night.

The on-stage collaborations with Keillor began in the early 1896s, after Atkinssuggested that teaming up might have popular appeal. Atkins had met Keillor as a guest on "A Prairie Home Companion," Keillor's public radio show.

Keillor tried his first live date using a non-Prairie' format with Atkins in the Northwest.

Their mini-tour marked the beginning of

Their mini-tour marked the beginning of occasional collaborations between the two. Atkins says audiences fall for Keillor's humorous stand-up tales of life in America, but his singing voice ain 't bad, either. "Garrison has a very pleasing voice," the guitarist said. "He's as amouth baritone. He writes a lot of songs. Some writer said that he's not a great singer, but the lyrics carry him through. He'll try anything, even falsetto. He's a great entertainer. He just charms people."

The "Sweet Corn" show opens with a Keillor monologue.

"He improvises on what we talk about during the day," Atkins said. "He doesn't Please see TEAM, F3

Copyright © 2021 Newspapers.com. All Rights Reserved.



https://www.newspapers.com/image/175851334

LOS ANGELES TIMES

TEAM: Atkins-Keillor to Bring 'Sweet Corn Show' to Humphrey's

Continued from F1
ever tell a joke, but he gets a lot of laughs. Garrison changes his show cevery night. He writes new material about the place he's visiting. The other day in Cincinnati, I told him about an affair I almost had at a hotel when I was a kid. He asked if he early all the lather term."

if he could tell that story." Keillor kept his audience grin-ning with the tale of a lusty but shy ning with the tale of a listy out siy young Atkins, who was too embar-rassed to ask a hotel clerk for the room number of a lady who had propositioned him. Instead, he gave the clerk a fictitious man's name, and was told he ought to hit the

After Keillor's monologue, Atkins comes out and the two do a few songs together, followed by some solo guitar pieces from At-kins, The two re-unite on-stage for the finale

the finale.

The musical agenda most nights includes some Atkins classics.

"I sing my hit, 'Would Jesus Wear a Rolex in His Television Show?' and a song about my Dad, 'I Still Can't Say Goodbye,' a tearjerker of industrial strength."

The summer tour is a brief

jerker of industrial strength."

The summer tour is a brief interlude in the lives of two men with heetic individual careers.

After putting "A Prairie Home Companion" on the shelf in 1987, Keillor moved to his wife's native Denmark for a time, but he soon returned to New York. He writes for The New Yorker and Atlantic magazines, and last year embarked on a new public radio program titled 'American Radio Company of the Air." The show mixes sketches and monologues by Keillor with performances of what he calls "classic American music" —Fats

Waller, Jimmie Rodgers, Leonard Bernstein and a wide range of

Bernstein and a wide range of others.

Atkins, at 66, is making more music than ever, more than 40 years after he recorded his first album for RCA. A new album with Dire Straits guitarist Mark Knopfler is due this fall.

fler is due this fall.

Although Atkins was best known in the 1950s and 1960s as more of a country picker, more recent recordings have placed him in rock and jazz contexts. He seems capable of shaping his fluid, polished style to fit just about any pureical estring. musical setting.

Most guitarists might well wonder what they could possibly teach Atkins, but he says he picks up new ideas from all kinds of musical

partners, including Knopfler.
"I learn from him. He's got a few
little licks I've lifted, and I've
shown him a few. Musicians do that 'Show me a lick.'

Atkins also hears lines for his guitar from orchestras and keyboard players but doesn't listen to guitar players a lot.

"I don't want to be accused of imitation," he said, "but, if I lift something from a sax or keyboard, no one knows."

no one knows."

Besides working as a musician,
Atkins began branching out in the
1950s. He designed guitars for
Gretsch, including the popular
Country Gentleman model, used
over the years by famous guitarists
including George Harrison. He still
designs guitars, these days for designs guitars, these days for

Unlike most modern guitarists, Atkins doesn't use a flat pick. He said his thumb-and-finger picking

technique, in which his thumb plays bass lines while his fingers find the melodies, developed naturally while he was growing up poor in the Appalachian Mountains of

rural Georgia.
"When I came along and developed a style, it wasn't because I was so smart. It was ignorance," he said. "I took a toothbrush and made

myself a thumb pick out of it. When there's no radio or TV around, no other music—that's the

around, no other music—that's the guy who'll come up with something different.

"I'm still learning to play. I never stopped trying to learn. I never stopped trying to get the mediocrity out of my playing, and the predictability."

