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# Keillor's humor hits hills, heartland

by SENA TAYLOR  
Record staff writer

Home-town humorist Garrison Keillor and famed guitarist Chet Atkins brought the prairie to the mountains of ParkWest Saturday evening with a performance that left even the most citified members of the audience hungering for homegrown sweet corn and a simple life in the country.

Keillor, who has made his mark on public radio nationwide by weaving tales of midwest civilization, took no time in letting the crowd of 3,000 know this was his first performance in Utah, and in fact, only his second visit to the state.

"It does make a person from the plains be slightly uneasy to be surrounded by these large land masses," he said, gazing up at the backside of the Wasatch from his outside stage. "What's on the other side of those hills?" he said curiously. "Something might come rolling down on you, so you have to keep looking around to make sure you won't get hit."

He ribbed the audience members sitting on the grass farthest back from the stage that, "there is a cougar problem here; you people sitting in the back might want to know that."

And with easy laughter rolling down from the hill on him and his "Sweet Corn Band," Keillor launched into his well-known theme song *Hello Love*, followed by a traditional cowboy song of his own writing, one verse of which he sang in Danish in honor of his wife.

Talking more than singing, Keillor told the audience, "This is paradise out here, I'm quite sure, to look up at these mountains. I didn't come from paradise peo-

ple; my people were seafarers, which means we only feel good when we are wet and cold and sick to our stomachs."

He described he tribe as "Calvinist puritanists" who were "tough."

"They never made love standing up for fear that people would think we were dancing," he joked, but with a serious tone of voice.

Keillor's *Sweet Corn Show* was sponsored by Utah public radio KUER FM-90, in celebration of the station's 30th anniversary. The July 28 performance was the last stop on the *Sweet Corn Tour* which had covered 19 cities in a round trip back to Keillor's present home in New York City.

Atkins' performance also left no one disappointed, with a medley of Beatles tunes and renditions of *Liberty* and *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. After Atkins did an equally excellent job in humoring the audience, he took the tempo down by paying a tearful tribute to his father called, *I Still Can't Say Goodbye*.

Keillor announced he had his son, Jason, on stage, as an electric guitarist for his band. After playing, *And the Band Played Waltzing Matilda*, Keillor shared with the audience that, "My son Jason told me recently he has felt a little stifled on this tour." So they upped the beat with a rousing R & B composition called *The Father of the Blues*, in which Keillor jokingly bemoaned his son's interests in hard guitar playing.

After a brief intermission in the three-hour concert, Keillor delivered *The news from Lake Wobegon*, going into great detail that this is the height of the vegetable season, when for seven weeks he can't get enough of his favorite vegetable, sweet corn.

Keillor also talked about the simplicity of life in the make believe Lake Wobegon, where, "the Lutherans drive Fords and the Catholics drive Chevys," and of course, "Where all the men are strong, the women good-looking, and the children above average."

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