

Keillor performs live from IU

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Garrison Keillor, best-selling author and radio cult figure, performed his weekly two-hour radio variety show for a full house last weekend at the Indiana University Auditorium in Bloomington.

Direct from the auditorium, "The American Radio Company" linked up its signal to more than 220 affiliate stations nationwide. Locally, the program aired live on WFIU, Indiana University's public radio station, which hosted the tour's local appearance.

Famed guitar picker Chet Atkins appeared on the Bloomington show. Atkins, a recipient of nine Country Music Awards, 10 Grammys and other honors, has recorded more than 75 original releases. He performed "Stardust," a song by the late Bloomington native Hoagy Carmichael.

Atkins, who collaborated with Keillor on an album set for release this year, also has been nominated for another Grammy. The 34th Annual Grammy Awards will air at 8 p.m. Tuesday on WISH-TV Channel 8.

The Saturday show included such songs as "On the Banks of the Wabash" and several Carmichael tunes. The troupe also performed a spoof on the Kinsey Institute for Sex Research, located at Indiana University, and an opera number based on the IU Auditorium.

Keillor and the cast are in the midst of a 15-city tour of the U.S.



PHOTO COURTESY INDIANA UNIVERSITY

Garrison Keillor performs with members of "The American Radio Company."

from Portland, Maine, to Berkeley, Calif.

"The response was incredible. We sold out all our seats (3,700) in hours," said Christopher Rund, director of public information for WFIU, which broadcasts Keillor's show each Saturday at 6 p.m.

"American Radio Company" is best known for Keillor's signature monologue, "The News from Lake Wobegon," based on the fictional town of Lake Wobegon, Minn. The two-hour program included orchestra music and comedy

sketches with a small group of actors, including Ivy Austin, who sings with the Muppets and does voice-overs for "Sesame Street."

One of the most popular aspects of Garrison's show is sound effects man Tom Keith, who has been with Keillor for 15 years. Keith provides such sounds as marching feet, rusty hinges, cars stuck in snow, chickens, trains and sea gulls. He uses props to create some sounds, such as the marching feet, and his own voice to mimic such noises as a car stuck in snow.

Now in its third season, the program is the successor to Keillor's previous weekly variety series, "A Prairie Home Companion" and is heard by 1.5 million people nationwide.

Keillor, who has penned four best-selling books, "Happy to be Here," "Lake Wobegon Days," "Leaving Home" and "We Are Still Married," recently wrote "WLT: A Radio Romance," a novel that chronicles the rise and fall of a Minneapolis radio station.