

■ REVIEW

'Prairie Home Companion' comes West

By DAVID CRISP
Of The Gazette Staff

Anyone who has seen sausage and legislation made might wonder who would spend up to \$35 to watch a live radio show — especially when it's already available at no charge to most anybody with an FM radio.

A Billings audience that filled every seat of the Alberta Bair Theater Saturday afternoon got plenty of answers. Garrison Keillor, the poet of American Protestantism, brought his long-running "A Prairie Home Companion" to town for a tight two hours that showed radio can look as good as it sounds.

Keillor delighted the crowd with a platter full of Billings references: from Sacrifice Cliff to Boot Hill to Custer's Last Stand to Frederick Billings himself.

The weekly episode of the horse opera, "The Lives of the Cowboys," was set in Billings, and even Keillor's weekly monologue meandered its way through the tale of a great-

great uncle who left Lake Wobegon as a Lutheran and arrived in Billings as a medicine man.

Inevitable references to Montana's current notoriety cropped up: Keillor had a character say he had been called in by the FBI to help with a bunch of Lutherans who were holed up demanding an increase in the minimum wage and more spending on social programs.

Montana showed up in other ways, too. Rosebud Creek rancher Wallace McRae, looking and sounding every inch the distinguished cowboy poet he is, recited two humorous poems and one serious one, preserving the approximate mix the whole show achieved.

Ian Frazier, an Ohio-born writer now living in Missoula, read a gracefully written section of his best-selling book "Great Plains." Frazier, more than any



GARRISON KEILLOR
at home in Billings

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