

'Red Shoes' is love letter to 'Prairie Home' fans

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Preaching to the choir is not such a bad thing.

And fans of the popular public radio show "A Prairie Home Companion" are just the audience director Peter Rosen must've had in mind when he made the documentary "Garrison Keillor: The Man on the Radio in the Red Shoes."

Review

The film is a love letter to Keillor and his show, delivered in the same meandering, quiet style Keillor uses to spin his "News from Lake Wobegon" yarns.

(Yes, meandering — in fact, the film feels like it's coming to an end at least three times before it eventually does. But the stories being recounted are so sweet that you're inclined to forgive it.)

Keillor started "A Prairie Home Companion" in Minnesota in the summer of 1974, back when most of the potential listeners were still familiar with the concept of a live radio program. Today, he notes, as those people die off, the younger fans may just reach the conclusion that he invented the genre and dub him a genius.

"He's not a fancy kind of guy," one fan says of Keillor, and she's right. Those only familiar with Keillor via his radio voice may be surprised to see he's a quiet man with little visible variety in his expression. It's his voice and his words that do the expressing,



Courtesy photo

In the spotlight: Garrison Keillor delivers one of his monologues in "The Man on the Radio in the Red Shoes," screening during the East Lansing Festival.

though, and they more than make up for it.

The film, which follows Keillor and the APHC gang for a year, unfolds almost like an episode of the show — bits of Keillor's mono-

logues are dropped in, and peppered with context and background about the show, both from backstage and in front of the curtain.

Keillor strives for a genuine light-heartedness with the show



Garrison Keillor: The Man on the Radio in the Red Shoes

» **Stars:** Garrison Keillor, the cast of "A Prairie Home Companion"

» **Director:** Peter Rosen

» **See it:** 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Hannah Community Center, 819 Abbot Road, East Lansing

and that seems to seep into his life (or is it vice versa?). He has an affinity for a well-told story, an authentic person and rootsy, old-timey music, all of which he brings to his shows with abundance.

Keillor takes pride in disobeying the stereotypical high school valedictorian advice to take the road less traveled; rather, he revels in being a part of the gang, and he makes of point of taking his show around the country to interact with the everyday people he entertains.

But as engaging as Keillor's stories are, the film is at its best when it lets other people talk about the show, and about Keillor.

Just about the only question it doesn't answer is: Why the red shoes?