

Entertainment
the minneapolis star wed., may 5, 1976 • 58

Keillor tours to air live radio message



GARRISON KEILLOR

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Garrison Keillor, humorist, musician and popularist of the Beach Boys' "Help Me Rhonda," has written a love song about David Stone.

The song is a touching remembrance of the days when Stone and his KSST, Sunset Valley Barn Dance drew Minnesota families to their radios. Saturday nights to listen to master of ceremonies Stone and his collection of fiddlers and singers.

Those are days Keillor would like to recreate and he is doing his best to achieve it.

FOR THE PAST two years, Keillor has been attempting to bring back live radio based on country sounds and contemporary humor with a vehicle called "A Prairie Home Companion" broadcast Saturdays on the six stations of the Minnesota Public Radio network.

To build the show's audience, the group will take its traveling in a rented mobile home, the show will take its first tour to 10 towns in three states.

THE FIRST STOP was in Marine on St. Croix, Monday night, where an overflow audience of more than 200 persons greeted Keillor in the 2nd-floor floor dance hall above the town hall.

Keillor's dress, a mixture of low and high culture, is emblematic of the blend in the show itself.

He wears grey and red wool hunting socks under a pair of well-worn work boots.

A rumpled light tan, almost tropical two-piece suit that might have been borrowed from Sidney Greenstreet covers a flowered print shirt and a pair of red suspenders. Wire-rim glasses frame his intense eyes.

The show is quality. There is no John Denver three-chord guitar strumming. Country fiddler Rudy Darling is a skilled artist, as are guitarists Sean Blackburn, Rod Bellville and Dave Hull. Keillor plays a mean autoharp and is a droll humorist.

THIS NIGHT, the quintet was joined by Judy Larson and Bill Hinckley, a pair of lively folk singers.

Keillor's humor doesn't quite fit the rural flavor of talking blues, ballads and just plain foot-stomping music the band offers.

It is sophisticated, and when



Old Town Hall was site of show



Powdermilk Biscuit Band and Keillor on stage

he talks about "Jack's Task Force for the Rehabilitation of the Over-Educated," he hits a sensitive nerve in this community of deep suburbia.

Keillor says he is wedded to live radio not for the sake of nostalgia but because of the value of the music and the medium.

"COUNTRY MUSIC and folk go right along with radio. It's the most intimate music there is. Like the telephone, radio can become very intimate," he says.

His humorous romance with the make-believe town of Lake Wobegon and its multifaceted main industry Jack's Auto Repair is an essential part of the show, Keillor says.

"It's a base I like to touch. It gives other people on the show a lot more freedom because the audience knows that eventually we will get around to it. It's a continuing story."

He also expresses surprise at how easy it is to earn laughter with the same stories and lines.

His musical essay on the restorative and purgative powers of Powdermilk Biscuits is a part of almost every show.

Invariably the laughs come on soft assertions that the biscuits "are expeditious."

"It amazes me how many times you can repeat something and have people laugh. You don't have to go out and feel you have to top this every time."

The next stop in the tour is in Decorah, Iowa, tonight with future appearances scheduled in Mantorville, Duluth, Grand Marais, Moorhead, St. Cloud, Madison, Minn., and River Falls, Wis.



Keillor: mean autoharp and droll humor