

Arts & Entertainment

Down-home radio show a 'sensation'

By Kathy Glenn

People look forward to Saturday night for many reasons. Whether it be post-game socializing or just curling up in front of the TV, it's a night when most people relax and take a breather. For those tired of football or "Fantasy Island," there's an alternative: "A Prairie Home Companion." KUCV, 90.9 FM, brings host Garrison Keillor and his guests to listeners every Saturday night at 9 p.m.

"A Prairie Home Companion" is a musical variety show with an appealing down-home flavor. "PHC" is best described as a good old-fashioned contemporary radio, and this elusive quality has given the show a loyal following.

According to Georgia Taggart, public information officer for the station, "PHC" has the ability to make listeners feel as though they're back in the early days of radio.

"We picked up 'Prairie Home Companion' because it was such a sensation we couldn't ignore it," Taggart said.

Although "PHC" may not be geared for the typical fine arts radio listener, Taggart said, the program has attracted all types of listeners, including a faithful college student following.

"PHC" is the brainchild of journalist and humorist Garrison Keillor. Assembled by Keillor in 1974, "PHC" is produced by Minnesota Public Radio and distributed by National Public Radio. After a network satellite system was completed in 1980, the weekly series was offered to all public radio stations and has more than two million listeners.

Since 1978, the World Theater in St. Paul, Minn., has been the home of "PHC" and the show included tour engagements across the country.

Keillor is a native Minnesotan who got his start in radio after graduation from college. He worked for Minnesota Public Radio for several years and later took a leave of absence to spend more time writing humorous pieces for *The New Yorker* and *Atlantic Monthly* magazines.



Photo courtesy KUCV

Garrison Keillor, host of "A Prairie Home Companion."

Keillor came back to radio in 1974 and the result is a program now considered one of the best in public radio.

Although Lake Wobegon, Powdermilk Biscuits, and Bob's Bank all are fictional, Keillor admits they have become very real to him, as well as to his audience.

Combined with the Butch Thompson Trio and an array of other guests, the show is quality entertainment.

KUCV is a non-commercial, non-profit public radio station, owned and operated by Union College in Lincoln. It offers "PHC" and fine arts radio in an on-going effort to supply the community with an alternative to commercial radio.

Financial support comes from many sources, including Union College as well as private grants. KUCV general manager Eric Graham said he hopes to see increased funding come from expanded membership contributions and corporate underwriting.

Underwriting involves a guarantee of financial support that is used to cover the costs of presenting programs.

KUCV does not sell advertising time, but through underwriting, credit is given to sponsor businesses at a fraction of the cost of commercial advertising. Underwriting also gives corporations the opportunity to display the interests of their companies, Graham said.

"Beethoven Bash," one of two yearly KUCV fund-raising events, is scheduled for Sunday through Oct. 23. The festival will include a "Prairie Home Companion" party scheduled for Oct. 22 at 8 p.m. The public is invited to make a trip to the KUCV station and listen to a special broadcast of "PHC." Refreshments will be served and "PHC" memorabilia will be on display.



Comateens comatose; Europe can have them

Comateens
Pictures on a String
Mercury Records

The Comateens, a New York band, got their career started on the European market. That's unusual because although the other side of the Atlantic is more tolerant of new kinds of music, this music is probably more American than Europeans want to hear. But amazingly, they made it there and are now ready to release their music at home.

Their sound is a mixture of almost every music form that has been around the last decade. Rock, pop, punk, rockabilly and black music all are mixed recognizably in the band's new wave sound.

Unfortunately, *Pictures on a String* is a collection of very mediocre songs. There is nothing intrinsically bad about this album — the songs are easy to dance and listen to and everything fits in together. But when a group doesn't have that spark, and the Comateens don't, their albums won't succeed.

Because of what sounds like a lack of excitement, many of the songs sound alike. "Get Off My Case" and "The Late Mistake," the first two cuts on the album, could easily pass as one song with only slight alterations.

"Pictures on a String" is probably the best cut on the entire album. It has a nice, catchy beat and the lyrics are interesting.

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Calendar satirizes Nebraska's 'Good Life'

In recent years, a wide variety of calendars featuring everything from the Sierra Club to Garfield have saturated the market. But it's safe to say there has never been a calendar like the 1984 Good Life Calendar.

The calendar, whose subtitle claims to have "all Nebraska's important cultural and historical dates," is the creation of UNL English and anthropology professor Roger Welsh.



Jeff
Goodwin

Welsh said he was motivated to put out the calendar by "all of the self-serving calendars that have pictures of some meadow in Nebraska and the picture was obviously taken in Montana."

Welsh said he sent out a few copies of a calendar last year as Christmas presents and the response was so good that he decided to market another calendar this year.

"It's aimed at the 37 or 38 people in Nebraska with a sense of humor," he said. "One of the things I've always admired about the pioneers was their ability to laugh at themselves and at this ridiculous place called Nebraska. But I've found that people tend to laugh at what they love the most."

The calendar records various disasters such as fires, floods, tornadoes and blizzards, as well as other historical dates.

Welsh said the calendar is by no means a complete compilation of all the disasters Nebraska has suffered.

"I included Carl Curtis' birthday but I left out Roman Hruska's," he said.

The calendar tells us that York has had not less than five fires, including four in the month of February.

Also included are such entries as: "June 14, 1934, Drought of 1934 broken; rain destroys crops" and the date of Johnny Rodgers' famous gas station robbery (May 20, 1970). And last, but not least, this entry under Nov. 6: "Roger L. Welsh born in Lincoln, 1936."

Most of the research for the calendar was done by reading old Nebraska history books. "It wasn't hard," Welsh said. "In fact it was kind of fun."

He said sales of the calendar have been "whimpering" and "they're going like warm cakes," but actually sales have been good.

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DANNY 'OH

It's the Renaissance

'It's the Renaissance' success in every aspect

Danny 'Oh
It's the Renaissance
Burning Bush Records

After seven months together, the Model Citizens Club has put together one of Lincoln's finest home-grown recordings this year. *It's the Renaissance* is a mini-LP featuring five of the group's strongest cuts, all written by leader Danny O'Kane. The album serves as a more tightly arranged version of the Model Citizens Club's hot live show.

The tracks stand as perfect examples of the abilities Midwesterners have for creating work equal to or better than big shot city "artists." The mixing and production on the disc is by far the most thoughtful ever done in this area. Technically, *It's the Renaissance* is almost flawless.

As for the quality of the music done on the album, O'Kane has carefully extracted a piece of his live show and honed it to crystal-clear perfection.

Anyone who has witnessed the Model Citizens Club in action knows what O'Kane can do on stage. With the able assistance of his four fellow club members, O'Kane envelops a dancing crowd with his tight funk melodies. His pop-style vocals relay lyrics uncluttered by philosophies. Only the melodies enhance the music. The group's sound is identifiable by their deep-funk approach to their performance. The effort is by all means successful.

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