



**Press Contacts:**

Donna Williams, 212.560.8030, [WilliamsD@wnet.org](mailto:WilliamsD@wnet.org)

Donald Lee, 212.560.3005, [LeeD@wnet.org](mailto:LeeD@wnet.org)

***American Masters***

***Garrison Keillor:***

***The Man on the Radio in the Red Shoes***

*Q&A with producer/director Peter Rosen*

**Q: Did you always want to be a filmmaker? What events brought you to become one?**

**A:** I was trained as an architect, and actually got my degree in architecture. But once I saw you had to work for some company for about 30 years before they would actually let you design anything, I quit after a year or so. I had always been taking many still photos since I was a teenager, won a few awards, was published, and one day you just pick up a film camera. I had my own 35mm Arri S, and started doing a lot of film shooting, made some docs in college, and one film just leads to another.

**Q: What inspired you to make this film? Why do you feel this film is significant or importance?**

**A:** After you make many docs, you really have to find new formats and new ideas to tell your story. If you make each film the same way, and only the subject changes, how can you start each day with a fresh enthusiasm and sense of discovery? With Garrison Keillor as a subject, because he's sort of an enigma as a subject, you could actually make an "enigmatic" film. A biography where you don't really know what's true and what isn't. A sort of labyrinth structure, and something that captures the laid back mood of the character by being a laid back film.

**Q: What do you want movie lovers to get out of this film?**

**A:** Maybe there's a direction to go in when you think about documentaries that breaks some new ground, where we don't have to use the same old boring story telling techniques, where you can not do interviews, and let visuals, music, and the subject himself tell the story. It's as though many documentary filmmakers never got over what they learned in school, and never think out of the box to find new uses of the medium of film. This is an art form only 100 years old, compared to others that are thousands of years old, so we have a lot to explore, and it's almost a mandate that we find new ways to put sequences together, to illustrate and describe emotions, and to tell the story.

**Q: What is your favorite scene? Why?**

**A:** I think in *The Man on the Radio in the Red Shoes*, the best scenes are when we tried to illustrate Keillor's internal thoughts with visuals that abstract or counterpoint his words. I got this idea after watching him always typing his stories on his laptop – in cars, in planes, at the airports, at home, everywhere, he was always writing something. As we shot that, I began to wonder what was going on inside his head, and then actually tried to illustrate that.

**Q: Creatively, what was the most challenging aspect of making the film?**

**A:** Because Keillor is a storyteller, with very blurred lines between what is real and what isn't, the challenge was to make a biography that wasn't really a biography, a sort of pseudo biography, where after a while it didn't really matter what was real and what was not real, because there was a deeper level of things going on in his life that we were witnessing, or imagining.

**Q: What is something different, unique, that an audience can expect from this film compared to other films in the industry?**

**A:** We tried here to break some new ground and abandon the traditional documentary format. There are no photos, no home movies, no archival film clips, no interviews with "experts" on various topics. Just an intimate camera up close with our subject. Also, once we break the standard three act story structure – 1. Introducing the character; 2. Depicting the crisis or conflict or hurdle to get over; and 3. The eventual resolution or redemption of the character – a new structure with of ebb and flow could exist. Without a traditional beginning, middle, and end, we ended up with an 86 minute mood piece.

**Q: Tell us the most outrageous, funny, or moving anecdotes from making this film.**

**A:** The moment I remember the most came about before we started production. Shortly after Garrison Keillor (script) and Robert Altman (director) finished their film, *A Prairie Home Companion* in 2006 I had a chance to meet Altman at a festival screening of his film. (The last production he would do before his death in 2008.)

I always thought he was the GENIUS of American cinema. As a documentary filmmaker, I always admired how he would create very natural action and dialog in front of several cameras, and just let it play out in overlapping words and movement that were unpredictable and very natural, like in a documentary.

So, when we got a chance to meet after his screening of the film Keillor wrote for him, I said, "Mr. Altman, we're about to start a documentary on Garrison Keillor." He looked at me, and the GENIUS of American cinema said to me, "Oh, wonderful. You will be working with the only genius I ever worked with!"

###