



Photo by Eric H. Roalson

Robert Earl Keen Jr.

A keen eye for his audience

Standing ovation ends show

By JOHN RIGHTER

Robert Earl Keen Jr. received a hero's welcome Friday night in his second appearance at the Front Porch Cafe. The A&M graduate and Sugar Hill Records signee combined a talented wit and storyteller's observation with some touching ballads and a Steve Earle rocker to delight his already converted audience.

Keen was definitely among friends Friday night. Although an established national act and rising star in country/folk circles, A&M lent a slightly more "homey" atmosphere for the talented songwriter. Keen repaid the hospitality by going the extra mile on the "good ole boy" routine.

Sporting a freshly cut, mod-layered haircut with a casual suit and paisley shirt, the urbanized, Austin Keen quickly adapted to the fond memories of his undergraduate days in Bryan-College Station. Having the opportunity to listen to a great songwriter from any place is wonderful, but Keen's observations and sometimes cutting wit on B-CS and A&M were especially entertaining.

Starting off with "Goin' Down In Style," a smart

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Keen reveals observations

By JOHN RIGHTER

After Robert Earl Keen's performance at the Front Porch Cafe Friday night, I had the opportunity to exchange thoughts and beer brands (Shiner Boch) with the reserved, talented songwriter. Sporting a full chew (Copenhagen), Keen discussed his music, ties to Bryan-College Station and friendships with Lyle Lovett and Steve Earle. The following is a portion of that interview.

How did it feel playing in front of a "homecoming"-type audience? Did you enjoy it?

"It was great. Great audience and wonderful people. I feel real comfortable here because I spent so much time in Bryan-College Station. My show actually relates more to Aggie experiences and I have a lot of old fans here, so it was a real special performance."

You place a high priority on your storytelling ability. Are you an active observer of people? Do you spend a lot of time talking to different people?

"No. In the storyteller vein I'm more of the aloof observer than the participant. I just don't talk to people as easy as others do. I feel much more comfort

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Michael Keaton stars as Carter Hayes and Melanie Griffith stars as Patty Palmer in "Pacific Heights," a less-than-thriller.

Plot sinks 'Heights' as thriller

By CAROL GLENN

From flying high as Batman, Michael Keaton plummets to disaster in the movie "Pacific Heights," sinking to the depths of a human-cockroach.

Directed by John Schlesinger and written by Daniel Pyne, "Pacific Heights" is the most disappointing so-called "psychological thriller" known to man.

I have never seen such a misuse of talent in my life. I couldn't believe that Twentieth Century Fox invested so much time and money into a story with such a stupid plot, insulting not only the writer but also the actors, director and anyone associated with the film.

"Heights" stars Melanie Griffith ("Working Girl") as Patty Palmer, Matthew Modine ("Vision Quest" and "Gross Anatomy") as Drake Goodman, and Keaton ("Batman" and "Mr. Mom") as Carter Hayes.

The story begins with Patty and Drake (girlfriend and boyfriend) buying an enormous and expensive Victorian home on the outskirts of San Francisco. They remodel the gigantic house and create two apartments out of the first floor to rent out to tenants so that the rent payments can help them meet their inflated mortgage.

Patty and Drake rent the first apartment to a quiet, older Japanese couple, Toshio and Mira Watanabe. They just want a serene apartment with no surprises.

Then Carter weasels his way into the other apartment and gives lame excuses to Patty and Drake why his wired money hasn't reached their bank yet. At first Carter seems to be the ideal tenant; he's a business man who travels a lot; he wants to pay for the first six months rent in cash, and he seems quiet. But as the plot unravels, the audience learns differently.

Carter changes the door locks and begins hammering and drilling at all hours of the night and breeds cockroaches.

Eventually the Japanese couple can not take the noise or the cockroaches any longer so they move out.

Patty and Drake try many times to evict Carter, but the law seems to be working against them.

Refusing to be driven from their new home, Patty and Drake stop at nothing to exterminate their human-cockroach tenant, Carter.

I won't bore you with the details, but the plot doesn't progress too much beyond this point.

Oh, the trails and tribulations of being a landlord. Keaton's portrayal of Carter is pathetic. It's like taking Mr. Mom and turning him into Jack Nicholson. It simply cannot be done. But, I also thought that Keaton was unsuited for the role of Batman.

Griffith and Modine also try but they, too, seem unsuited for their roles as well.

I guess I shouldn't criticize the actors too much; they did the best they could with their shallow characters.

There really wasn't anything in this movie that seemed to work. The music by Hans Zimmer didn't create the eerie feeling that thrillers need. The cinematography by Amir Mokri didn't seem all that impressive or scary, and the suspense and excitement that makes a movie a thriller was nonexistent.

This film is rater 'R' for brief nudity and intense profanity.

Unfortunately, the only thrill in "Pacific Heights" occurred as the credits started to run, and you realize that you are no longer the victim of movie torture.

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