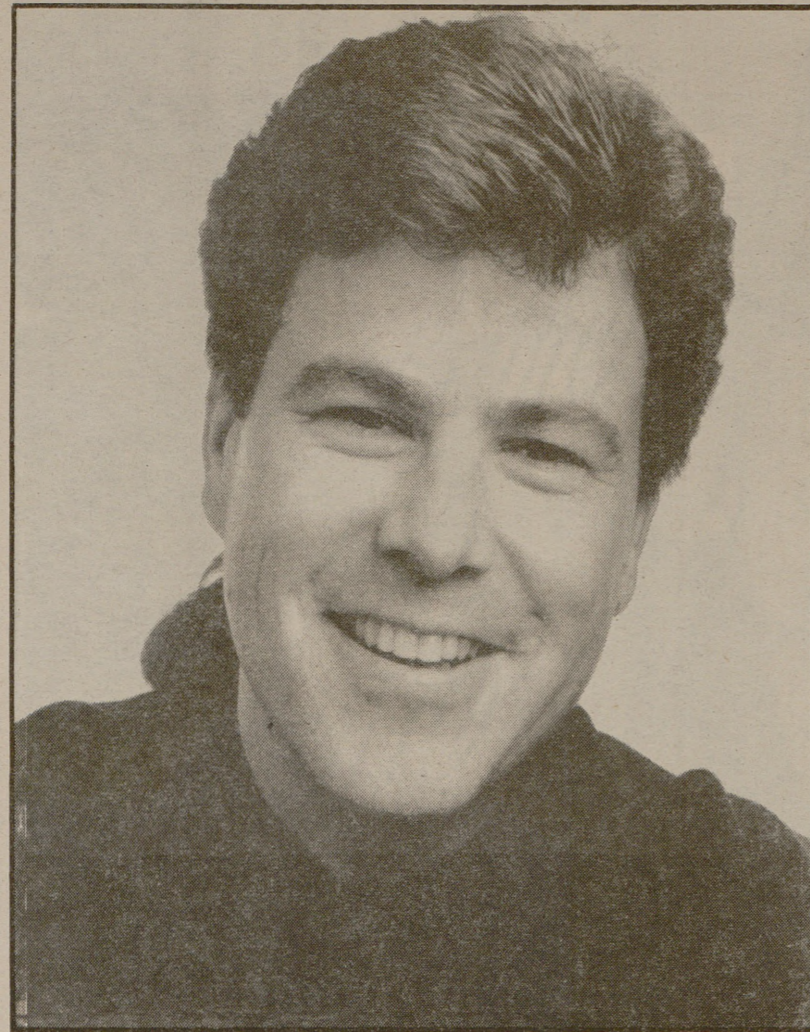


## Keen plays his brand of country-folk music



By Rob Newberry

The Front Porch Cafe brings former Texas A&M student and Texas music great Robert Earl Keen, Jr. back to College Station tonight for a performance scheduled for 9.

Keen's music is more on the folksy side of country, with an emphasis on narrative songs and story-telling. "I've been able to write narrative songs pretty easily," Keen says. "I'm better at following a plot line than I am at using a certain amount of assonance or alliteration."

Several of the tunes off Keen's most recent release, *West Textures*, stem from this type of story-telling. "I prefer a story-based song more than a love song," Keen adds. "I just think they have more to say. It comes down to actions speaking louder than words."

"For instance, in 'The Road Goes On Forever,' this guy basically takes the fall for the girl. If you show that in a song it shows how much more this person cares for that person than just saying 'I love you, I love you' over and over."

Keen's songwriting inspiration comes from varied sources; from little-known acquaintances to his

love of reading (Keen was an English major while at Texas A&M).

"That particular song ('The Road Goes On Forever') is inspired by a couple of people that I don't know very well — by their lifestyle — which is basically a girl that never gets enough partying and a guy that's this kind of shady wheeler-dealer. But what I did with them in the song is entirely fictional."

Keen feels his interest in country-folk isn't exactly unique to himself. "What I do is fairly common, particularly when you're talking about one person with a guitar," Keen says. "Everyone I know who has taken a solid stab at that kind of music usually supports a lot of the songs by telling stories around them."

Nevertheless, commercial country radio seems to be heavy on the pop side of country — mostly the trite love songs that Keen shies away from. Keen says he's not concerned about the commercial market.

"I wouldn't ever try to make the market want what I am," Keen says, but then adds, "I may become more

commercial as I go on in because my albums will become more sophisticated, musically as well as lyrically."

But Keen will likely experience some commercial success in the upcoming months, not exactly as a performer, but as a songwriter. Eddy Raven is scheduled to release a single that Keen co-wrote this month. "There's something that has always been a dream of mine — to hear one of my songs on the radio. It will come out this month, and I expect by March, I can turn on the radio and there's my song, which is real exciting to me."

Keen's show tonight should be pretty much a set of his standard material. "I've got lots of new songs and new stories." He adds, with a laugh, "As far as handing out heart-shaped chocolates, I may do that — it's a possibility."

"Getting back there always does give me a good feeling," Keen continues. "This club, the Front Porch, and one of my old songs, 'This Old Porch' — that sounds like something out of a Tennessee Williams play to me."

## Violinist to perform at Festival Hill

Festival Hill in Round Top will present a concert featuring violinist Sheryl Staples on Saturday at 3 p.m. in the large concert hall.

The program, also featuring pianist Eugene Rowley, will include works by Jean-Marie Leclair, Eugene Ysaya and Sergei Prokofiev.

Staples, a native of Los Angeles, is one of America's most promising violinists. In addition to performing with the Los Angeles Philharmonic and the Pacific Symphony, she has appeared on several nationwide television and radio broadcasts.

The Los Angeles Times has described Staples as having "an exhilarating poise, as well as a tone of opulent sound and consistent sheen."

Concert tickets are \$7.50 per person. An optional \$30 gourmet dinner will be served at 6 following the concert. Less expensive fare can be found one mile away at the Round Top Cafe, voted the best country cafe in Texas.

Festival Hill is a few miles past Brenham, a beautiful hour's drive from College Station.

For more information and reservations, call (409) 249-3129 or write Festival-Institute at P.O. Box 89, Round Top, Texas 78954.

# music



SONDRA N. ROBBINS

## Kiss and tell Anthropologist describes beginnings of kissing

By Terri Welch

Do you remember your first kiss? Maybe it was during recess way back when, or on the front porch at the end of your first date. It could be one of those things you do not want to remember.

Who thought of kissing anyway? When the anthropology department asked its freshman classes to make a list of customs practiced by all of humankind, one student listed "kissing."

"None of our training, our texts nor our graduate classes had ever mentioned the subject of kissing," Dr. Vaughn M. Bryant Jr., head of the Department of Anthropology, said. "So we had no ready answer to offer."

Bryant discovered there was very little information on the subject and began to search for answers. Even in the earliest written texts there are no indications of kissing, he said.

However, around 1500 B.C. in the Vedic Sanskrit texts of India, there are references to the importance of rubbing and pressing noses together as signs of affection.

"This may not be true kissing as we know it today," Bryant said, "but we believe it may have been its beginning."

By the early fifth century A.D., he said, Vatsyayana had recorded many of the ancient verses of Vedic literature in the "Kama Sutra."

"In it, he faithfully records hundreds

of erotic kissing examples and techniques of kissing," Bryant said.

Among the many examples are the detailed instructions of how one should kiss, what parts of the human body are the best places to kiss and the special techniques one should use when kissing sensitive areas.

Interestingly, kissing does not seem to become an important practice in any of the Mediterranean region until the Roman era, Bryant said.

"Of the early Western cultures," he said, "it is the Romans who should be credited with popularizing and spreading the art of kissing throughout the western Mediterranean and Europe."

Bryant says the osculum was a kiss of friendship, delivered as a peck on another's cheek. It was not a kiss of passion, but a way of greeting a friend.

Our custom dictates that males do not kiss other males, Bryant says, but that is still popular and expected in other Western cultures.

The "French kiss" was the Roman kiss of wild passion, the ultimate kiss, Bryant says. Poets like Catullus preferred its use and described it as "sweeter than sweet ambrosia."

Centuries later, Christians incorporated the kiss as a symbolic and ceremonial event.

"The public and passionate kiss at the end of the wedding ceremony

sealed the eternal bond of love between the bride and groom," Bryant said.

Yet love and good nature have not always surrounded this cultural phenomenon, he said. At one time, kissing abruptly declined.

"The Great Plague raged through London in 1664-1665," Bryant said. "At the time, it was believed that the plague was transmitted by touch. These circumstances would easily have led to the avoidance of kissing."

Relating to the decline of physically kissing today, Bryant says that even though no instances of AIDS transmission from kissing have been documented, the non-contact kiss, or "air-smack," seems to be gaining popularity.

Bryant attempts to provide the reasons why the kiss is not universal.

"Some societies likened kissing to exchanging filth from one mouth to another. Others believed their life force or souls could be sucked from their bodies while kissing," Bryant said.

Still others believed kissing was a cannibalistic act conceived by Europeans who hoped to "eat" their victims, he said.

"No wonder that kissing wasn't, and still isn't, accepted by many of the non-Western cultures of the world," Bryant said.