

## ***So You Want to Host a House Concert?***

By Paula Reynolds

We hadn't been in these parts long when a new acquaintance asked, "So you like music...ever been to a house concert?" My husband and I exchanged quizzical glances, decided we'd have to risk looking less-than-sophisticated, and haltingly replied, "What's that?"

Now here we are, almost 3 years out, and more sold on house concerts than your momma was on Fuller Brush. If you're a greenhorn to the concept, as we once were, a house concert is just that...live music in someone's house. You simply show up, fork over the requested donation, and make yourself at home. Having hosted 17 shows since our initial launch in April 2005 with *Mike Blakely and the Whiskey Traders*, Marty and I have found being house concert hosts one of the most amazing rides we've been on together. From the heady rush of having one of your favorite performers play in your living room, to the stream of newfound friends/attendees, to the all-around romp of a fun evening, it's been a phenomenal journey.

I'm often asked a slew of questions about hosting house concerts, so I thought writing about a few of the "FAQ" might make a good little column. That said, let's begin this dual-personality interview...

### ***HOW DID YOU GET THE IDEA TO DO HOUSE CONCERTS?***

Plagiarism...like every other good idea come to fruition! We attended our first house concert at Jack and Barbara Field's home where they host Kerrville House Concerts. It was awesome. A little light bulb went on over my head, I nudged Marty and said, "We could do this!", and the rest is history. We also stole the idea of having a potluck between sets. It's a little more work, but well worth it. How cool is it to be eating potato salad with your favorite singer/songwriter while you discuss chord progression on the latest hit??

### ***HOW DO YOU GET THE ARTISTS YOU HOST?***

For our first show, we decided to contact one of our newly discovered favorites, Mike Blakely. The internet makes it a breeze to get in touch with these folks, and after a few emails with Mike we had it set. Marty set up a great website to cover all bases, including reservations; an angle that has been integral in so many ways to making these things a success. I've done about 40% artist solicitation and the other 60% have come to us via email, press kits, etc. We get artist inquiries frequently as house concerts are one of the favorite venues of many of these folks.

### ***WHY DO ARTISTS LIKE TO PLAY A VENUE THIS SMALL?***

Remember now, Sparky...size doesn't matter! House concerts are swimming in quality from every angle. The artists absolutely love playing to an audience that isn't mostly focused on the game on TV over in the corner or trying

to get the bartender's attention...they're there for the music. Attentive listening is what it's all about, and the artists in turn give 110%. A symbiotic relationship develops quickly and it's almost like the old commercial..."I love you, man! No...I love you more, man!" On the less romantic but very critical side (artists have bills to pay, too), every bit of the donation collected is given to the artist, CD sales are generally very good, and we always offer a guest room and hot breakfast with the world's best home-roasted coffee (according to Willis Alan Ramsey). You'd be surprised how many take us up on it. And really, it's not as small as one might think. We've had as few as 23 and as many as 78!

### ***HOW CAN I FIND OUT MORE ABOUT HOSTING A HOUSE CONCERT?***

I'm always happy to visit with anyone who's thinking about doing their own series. The more the better. My contact info is on the website at [www.hilltophouseconcerts.com](http://www.hilltophouseconcerts.com), Additionally, there are actual "how to" publications out there such as a booklet put out by the folks who run the house concert series *Flowers in the Desert* in Brenham ([www.houseconcerts.com](http://www.houseconcerts.com)). Their website also has an excellent comprehensive listing of house concert venues across the country. Amazon lists a couple of books as well, those being **The Complete Guide to House Concerts: And Other Satisfying Alternative Venues (InstantPro)** by Nyree Belleville at 14.95 and **House Concerts: A Guide for Musicians and Hosts** by Douglas McLeod and Kimberli Ransom at 189.73 (maybe it contains the secret for booking Willie??). Fran Synder's website, [www.concertsinyourhome.com](http://www.concertsinyourhome.com) is another great site for info and networking.

### ***HOW WOULD YOU SUM UP THE PROS AND CONS OF BEING A HOST?***

I'm just glad you didn't phrase this as "Likes and Dislikes"...I'd have to go dye my hair platinum or something. The pros are very easy...the joy of live music is hard to beat. When a performer is 2 feet away from you at eye level, the atmosphere is blanketed with rapt listening, and the artist is giving a no-holds-barred rendition of their best work, how can one not think they've died and gone to music heaven? Meeting so many others who appreciate and support live music has been a joy, as well. We truly must have the finest folks in Texas for audiences. The downside would be the amount of prep and physical work involved. However, I've always loved throwing a good party, so there's the silver lining. Hosting house concerts is purely a labor of love and we feel fortunate to be able to do this. As long as folks come out and support these wonderful musicians, we'll keep on keeping on!

### ***HOW CAN I FIND OUT ABOUT FUTURE HOUSE CONCERTS IN THIS AREA?***

Our website has current info on upcoming house concerts. Additionally, folks can join our email list by sending a request via the "Reservations" page at [www.hilltophouseconcerts.com](http://www.hilltophouseconcerts.com). We also try to post flyers around town in visible spots. Kerrville House Concerts has a mailing list that can be joined by contacting Jack or Barbara Fields at [sunbeam@hilconet.com](mailto:sunbeam@hilconet.com). There's a new kid on the block over in Boerne...House Concerts in the Hill Country. Contact Robert Hurley at [houseconcertshc@gmail.com](mailto:houseconcertshc@gmail.com) to join his mailing list.

If music makes you happy, get on out there and support live music and house concert venues. If there were ever a win-win scenario, this is it!