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House Concerts Rock

Written by Jon Lee Cope

For more information on House Concerts
please visit the following websites:



Russ & Julie's House Concerts

<http://www.houseconcerts.us>

or

<http://www.russandjulie.com>

House Concert Resources:

<http://www.jrp-graphics.com/houseconcerts/resources.html>

NIGHTLIFE

HOUSE Concerts ROCK

By Jon Lee Cope
Photo by Dina Pielaet
Inset photos courtesy
of Russ & Julie Paris

If you and a bunch of friends could pull your money and have your favorite recording artist perform for you in your living room wouldn't you just freak? What a night. Guess what? It's not as much of a dream as you think.

The stage is set. Musicians are warming up. Sound check says systems are Go. Musicians mill about, getting ready for the show, telling stories of life on the road and tuning instruments.

This concert venue sports rented folding chairs, wedding photos, and a china cabinet. Kids are roadies, depending on their mood, and concertgoers hit the door with homemade treats in hand, and the occasional bottle of red. This is the Ventura County home of Russ and Julie Paris, and this is a phenomenon known as a House Concert.

A house concert creates opportunity for fans and musicians to get together and celebrate their love of music. Russ and Julie Paris have held performances in their home since 1997, hosting artists including John McEuen, Jim Messina, Mary McCaslin, Chris Hillman & Herb Pedersen, Severin Browne to name a few.

Russ & Julie Paris
House Concert Hosts



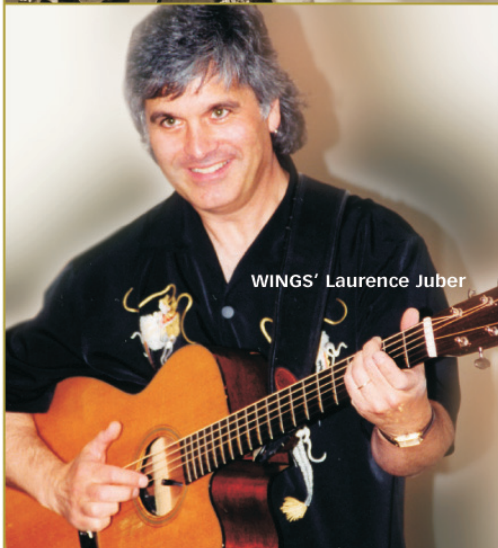
Wendy Waldman



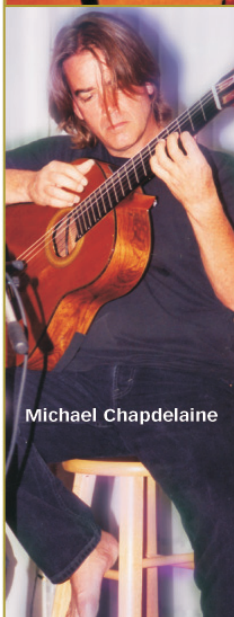
Jim Messina



Caroline Aiken



WINGS' Laurence Juber



Michael Chapdelaine



Hollye Dexter



Daryl S.

Veteran singer/songwriters Lowen & Navarro play tonight. Their songs have been recorded by such notable talents as *The Bangles*, *The Four Tops*, and *the Temptations*. They are perhaps best known for penning one of Pat Benatar's biggest hits, *We Belong*. This is their third gig at Russ and Julie's, and clearly they respect the venue. "A house concert is about the music," says Navarro. "I know that tonight there are going to be several dozen people who will be as emotionally charged by what we put out there as I am playing it."

People traveled from as far as Chicago and Detroit to Ventura County to see the duo. The place is packed. The chance to be close to the musicians is part of the appeal. "The more intimate the venue, the greater the emotional charge," says Navarro.

House concerts can be lucrative for artists as well. At Russ and Julie's, all "recommended donations" from the door go directly to the artists. Russ explained that the reason they work with recommended donations is to avoid being considered a business, which would raise all sorts of licensing issues. It's like a musical Tupperware Party.

"You'd be surprised at the musicians who are open to this idea," says Russ. "It blows people away that it's possible to get a favorite musician to play your living room." Lowen sums it up this way, "Musicians are like any small business in America; it's tough to stay in business. You make a place to play and we will come."

There is a real sense of community at a house concert. People of all ages listen in rapt attention as Lowen and Navarro spin their well told tales of life, love, loss and growing older.

"You cannot throw a house concert and worry about stuff being spilled on the carpet," says Julie. You have to like the idea of opening your house to strangers. The concerts have become so popular with musicians that they have to turn artists away. The waiting list for a booking is four years, with calls coming every day. Musicians love the venue, because a house concert has a "captive" audience of fans that come to listen, not to eat, drink or pick-up dates. Songwriters, such as Lowen and Navarro not only want your ear, they want hearts and minds.

Russ and Julie were childhood sweethearts; their love of music is matched only by their love of one another. They like to slow dance in the kitchen as they clean up, basking in their good fortune at being able to turn so many people on to the artists they love. "There are no strangers here, just friends we haven't met," says Russ.

It is possible to throw your own house concert. Russ & Julie learned by a lot of trial and error, picking up a few tips they're happy to share. Generally speaking, the first step is to go to a house concert and see how it's done. Then, approach an artist and see if they will play in your home. Surprisingly, many will say yes. They host from 60-100 in their home, but a group of 15 to 20 people can be a great house concert. It is important to communicate with the musicians, and let them know how the venue is booking up. Keep neighbors happy by inviting them, by limiting most concerts to Saturday nights, and by ending at a reasonable hour.

Rent some chairs, and let artists bring their own sound equipment, or do your concert "unplugged" for an acoustical set. Invite friends and family, and if you don't feel your house is made for music, rent a recreation room or small public hall. Concerts have been held on roofs or even backyards. The important thing is to have a good time; the residual effect of all that good feeling will keep your house in good chi for months.

At the encore, tonight's crowd joins in singing the chorus. The feeling in the room is so on-fire, the musicians ask if people have immediate plans, because it feels like the night could go on forever. The crowd responds happily, that there is absolutely no where in the world they would rather be. Someone yells, "What about Russ and Julie?"

"They can get a hotel!" someone answers. But that's not going to happen, because for Russ and Julie Paris there's no place like home.

For information about Russ and Julie's House Concerts, or hosting your own, visit jrp-graphics.com/houseconcerts.html or call 818.707.2179