

# How to Host a House Concert?

By -Joe Uveges *Singer/Songwriter*

## WHAT YOU NEED!

The first secret to having a house concert is to have a . . . house. This isn't absolutely necessary but it helps. A yard or a church hall will work, but the main reason house concerts are so magical and intimate is because they happen in your very own living room. The size of the space matters less than the people you invite. Generally, if you have a decent sized living room or an area that opens up into another room, you can very comfortably fit 30 – 50 people with no trouble at all.

The second thing you need is people. Please remember, people do not come to house concerts because they are necessarily fans of the artist. They come because YOU invited them to come. This is huge, because the vast majority of singer/songwriters who are doing this kind of show, aren't getting played on the radio and have little or no name recognition. Still, from their perspective, having a night with 40 attentive people in a living room could be the highlight of a tour. Take the risk.

## HOW TO START

Find a date that works for you and your particular artist. Ship out invitations via snail mail or email. You can get promo material from the artist or download it from their web site. Make your own concert advertisement or use theirs. (Making it personal helps but it isn't necessary.) Explain in the invite that the house concert phenomenon is "sweeping the country" (which it is). Explain that there is an artist coming through whose music you really love and you are hosting a concert in your home. You will be collecting an artist donation \$10–20 for the event and you'd love for them to come.

Reservations are a must. That way if someone has an emergency, the artist will not be adversely affected. Maybe I'm being too blunt here. Always overbook by 20% because 20% of your reservations will not show up. That is always the case. If you have seating for 40 people, take reservations for 48–50. If for some reason they all do show up celebrate, and break out the boxes. The performer will not complain I guarantee it.

Chairs! We have done a number of things and all of them worked. 1) Borrow chairs from your church or school. 2) Rent chairs from your local rental place. (usually .40 to .70 cents a chair). 3) Ask special friends to bring a few folding chairs with them. Lawn chairs work but they tend to take up more room than the classic steel folders you'd find in any church hall.

Food and drinks are optional. You can supply beer and munchies or a "sweety/snacky", and set up a little donation jar. You will end up breaking even on it. Or tell people they can bring their own wine and a small plate to share. You could also buy a whole pig and roast it over an open fire for 12 hours while drinking vodka and singing old labor organizing songs. My point is that you can make the event your own. The money that is collected at the door should go to the artist, although I have on occasion made deals with hosts to help cover the expense of the beer or wine they purchased. This is open to negotiation with any given artist. CD sales are obviously for the artist as well.

Sound systems. That is the responsibility of the artist who often is traveling with some kind of PA. If they are not, you will have to do one of two things: find a local musician or music store manager who can comfortably cover what the artist needs (approx. price \$100–200) to be paid for from the door or by a generous host. Or if the crowd is small enough (under 30) have the artist do the show acoustically with no PA.

## HOW WILL THIS HOUSE CONCERT MAKE ME LOOK?

This house concert will decidedly NOT make you look fat. It WILL make you look cosmopolitan and a touch courageous. It will also affect the quality of certain friendships causing them to deepen through the shared experience of a magical night of music and stories.

Well, that about does it. I have done a few hundred of these shows all over the country Every one is unique and delightful in its own way, partly because of the artist, but partly because the people you invite help make a night into something not even the artist can anticipate. Truly, to quote Neil Young, "**Live music is better. Bumper stickers should be issued.**"

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