



Mike Burley / Special to The Star

Musicians John McEuen, left, and his son Nathan play and sing at a concert at Renee Bodie's house in Agoura Hills on April 23. John McEuen is a founding member of the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band.

House Concerts are up close and intimate

By Alicia Doyle
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Renee Bodie celebrated her 45th birthday with a home concert and 92 friends. Five years later, living room concerts are a regular gig, drawing musicians from the Nitty Gritty Dirt Band, The Byrds and other groups from the 1970s.

"By the end of my birthday party, people were saying I should do it more often," recalled Bodie of Agoura Hills. "I have a lot of friends who are musicians, so I just kept on doing it."

The local shows join about 300 across the country in a growing trend of musical performances simply called "house concerts," Bodie said. The groups communicate through the Internet about coming artists and show dates. For instance, nearly 40 U.S. states as well as Canada offer information on house concerts at <http://www.houseconcerts.com>.

"It's a wonderful, intimate setting; you can actually get up close and see the performer," Bodie said. "The audience is more sophisticated as far as musical taste. They really want to hear the music."

Consider another series of house concerts, these by Julie and Russ Paris of Oak Park, who started hosting house concerts about eight years ago, so people could experience live music in a warm, intimate environment.

"We open up our home to our friends and neighbors because we want to share great music with them," Russ Paris said. "In the area where we live, there are too few venues where people can go to experience great music in a close and friendly environment. Great music makes us happy, and we want to share that with

To know more

For more information about coming performances at the Bodie house, go online at <http://www.bodiehouse.com>
For concert information at Russ and Julie Paris' house, go online at <http://www.houseconcerts.us>

others around us."

While some house concerts are performed in backyards across the country, "we like to keep ours in the living room for the added sense of warmth and intimacy that it lends to the evenings," he said. "We're just music fans who started doing this because we love to be able to share great music with others."

Performances at the Bodie house on Jon Dodson Drive occur about once a month. To prepare, the Bodies replace the living room furniture with chairs and set up a dessert and appetizer buffet. Though it's work to play host, "there is always a moment when I look out at the audience and see their faces, and it's incredible to see people enjoying the music," Renee Bodie said.

Past performers include Freebo, a former bassist for Bonnie Raitt, and Chris Hillman, a former member of The Byrds, the Flying Burrito Brothers and the Desert Rose Band. Severin Browne, Penny Nichols, Crosby Loggins, Eric Hansen, John McEuen and other musicians have also performed at the Bodie

house.

Linda Schroeder of Westlake Village, who has attended five Bodie house concerts, particularly enjoyed hearing musical artists Caroline Aiken and Antara & Delilah. She said the joy of house concerts is the intimate setting and having the opportunity to watch performers she might not have chosen to see at larger venues.

"It's also nice to be able to easily meet the performers after the concert and compliment them on their wonderful performance and buy their CD right then and there," Schroeder said.

Both the Bodie and Paris venues are familiar to Rick Hermelin of Thousand Oaks. He has attended most concerts hosted by the Bodies and said he has seen Aiken perform three times. He's also seen performances by the Joel Rafael Band and Lowen & Navarro. "What I gain is the opportunity to enjoy listening to very talented artists that I would probably not go see anywhere else," Hermelin said.

Gayle Rasmussen moved to Carpinteria three years ago and was "thrilled to find that these music lovers in Agoura were offering such a unique setting for concerts." She has attended about 20 concerts at the Bodie and Paris homes combined, and particularly remembers performances by Crosby Loggins and Antara & Delilah.

"Each show lends the audience an intimacy with the musicians that you just cannot get at any other type of setting," Rasmussen said. "In hearing it in such an intimate setting, you come away with a much greater appreciation for the music. You feel like you are part of the show instead of a spectator."