

Music Notes

House concerts open the door to a unique concert experience

by Greg Johnston

Have you ever dreamed about having a favorite musician perform right in your own living room and inviting a few friends over to join in the fun? For the last two years, two Albuquerque men have lived out these dreams. Neal Copperman and Jeff Hanson produce house concerts, a grass roots musical event where a touring musician performs in a private home. At each concert, no more than 50 people partake in the intimate and informal concert experience.

On Sunday, March 24, singer-songwriter Eliza Gilkyson will play her original folk music in Hanson's Albuquerque home. Copperman and Hanson are excited about the show and say that Gilkyson, a former New Mexico resident, is the most successful artist of the more than 20 musical acts they have presented. The two promoters are both enthusiastic music fans with diverse musical tastes. They are happy to be part of a trend that is relatively new to New Mexico.

"We can see lots of great music and not even have to leave the house," Copperman said. He and Hanson say a house concert is like a party you throw for your friends combined with a concert. Guests arrive sometimes with food and snacks and are asked to make a donation at the door, usually \$10. Seating is on the sofa or on dining, patio or folding chairs. Musicians perform most times on acoustic instruments and usually without a microphone. The audience comes to listen intently, free of the many distractions that hinder other concert settings.

The house concerts are a way for audiences and performers to share an intimate musical dialogue. Performers like the up-close-and-personal approach because they have the undivided attention of the audience. Sometimes the

quiet intimacy is a bit unsettling for musicians who have grown accustomed to noisy interruptions during their shows. Some have been known to joke that the audience should break glasses or rattle beer bottles to replicate a usual concert experience.

Copperman and Hanson agree that house concerts also contribute to positive musical community. Audience members are anxious to participate in ways other than just attending shows, such as bringing food. One local business, the Blue Dragon Coffee House, provides a free meal to the performers passing through town. Local media such as KUNM FM, KBAC FM and the Weekly Alibi have done work to promote the concerts, which now average about two a month.

The cost of putting on a concert is extremely low, typically about \$40 a show, because there is little in the way of up-front expenses. The promoters absorb all costs and the artists collect profit from donations at the door and the sale of CDs. It's pretty common for those who attend to buy a CD, which the artist is usually willing to autograph. Copperman and Hanson say they have each built an extensive collection of recordings since they began to put on shows.

In the late '70s, Eliza Gilkyson made her home in **Cerrillos, N.M.**, and was known to her New Mexico fans simply as Lisa. She built a loyal fan base through her infectious folk music, coupled with her on-stage charm and charisma. She eventually left New Mexico for the musical Mecca of Austin, Texas.

Since 1987, she has recorded six albums, including one

released on her own record label, Realiza Records. Her most recent album, "Hard Times in Babylon," has earned the strongest critical acclaim of her career. Gilkyson

describes the recording as "a diary of a season of love and loss." In describing "Hard Times," *The Austin Chronicle* said, "Personal stories and striking melodies are all conveyed with an uncommon amount of magic from a woman who, after years of searching, has found her voice."

Last year, Gilkyson was in the spotlight for her contribution on "A Nod to Bob: An Artists' Tribute to Bob Dylan on His 60th Birthday" on Red House Records. Gilkyson chose to record the song "Love Minus Zero/No Limit" after searching through Dylan material for days. The track has been described as "stunning" and "drop dead gorgeous." When Dylan's milestone birthday became the subject of major media attention last year, Gilkyson was quoted in *USA Today* as an authority on the lasting impact of Dylan's music.

Gilkyson's March tour of New Mexico includes stops in Silver City and Taos. Fans who want to know more about her Albuquerque appearance and about house concerts can send an e-mail to abqmusic@att.net or call 232-9868.



Former New Mexico musician Eliza Gilkyson will perform a house concert on Sunday, March 24.