

# Giving Him the Six Degrees: An interview with Kevin Bacon as he comes to The Odeum

Kevin Bacon and his brother Michael will be bringing their band, The Bacon Brothers, into the Greenwich Odeum on Friday, July 16. I had the opportunity to speak with Kevin via phone last week in advance of his show.

**John Fuzek (Motif):** We actually played a show together quit a while back. You played in Newport, probably 2004ish. I opened for you. I guess I can do “Six Degrees of Kevin Bacon” with you.

**Kevin Bacon:** You know we’ve actually played around with the six degrees thing with music, which is actually pretty easy to do because, you know how it is, you played a gig with us, you end up working with people or playing on records with people who played with other people, you can get pretty far down the six degrees road just with the music thing...

**JF:** How did the pandemic affect you? Both in music and film...

**KB:** I can tell you that the Ides of March, that moment that we all remember when everything seemed to go bye-bye, I was shooting TV show that I’m on in New York, City On A Hill, and I got the call that we were going to suspend production, we’d kind of gotten wind of this pandemic. I’d got the call that we were going to suspend production for a couple of weeks, and we were in the studio finishing up our last record and I just had this sense that it wasn’t just going to be a couple of weeks. My whole family was out in Cali, and so I booked a flight and left NY and that was it for another, whatever it was, months. I was in LA and I ended up going back and starting up again, we ended up shooting the remaining six episodes, we had shot two. I guess started back in June and we were able to mix the record, sort of remotely, you know, pass mixes around. I also wrote a song in LA, and we cut that, again using file sharing. I did go into a studio that a buddy of mine owns down the street from our place in LA, put on masks, and he mixed it and we were able to get some guitars and some drums in isolated rooms, you know, it was just all that crazy stuff. So, yeah, this is the first time back.

**JF:** You haven’t played any shows yet? Will this be the first one back to playing at the Odeum?

**KB:** No, we did play one show. We went to Iowa. We went to a Casino in Iowa and played a single show about a week ago.

**JF:** Are you in Rhode Island right now?

**KB:** I’m not right now, I am actually on my way overseas this weekend, I’m doing a film in Bulgaria.

**JF:** What are you working on in Bulgaria?

**KB:** I’m doing a film called *The Toxic Avenger*.

**JF:** I think I have heard of that. You WERE in Rhode Island because Kyra (Sedgewick) is working on a film here, right?

**KB:** Yes, Kyra is up there now, it's very serendipitous that we're playing in RI while we're working in RI.

**JF:** You have played the Odeum in the past, correct?

**KB:** I believe we have, yes.

**JF:** It's a great room, I have played there a couple of times, good sound, good people.

**KB:** I seem to remember having a good time. We really like those old converted movie theaters, we've played a lot of those all over the country.

**JF:** When you started out, did you want to be a musician or an actor or both or just whatever came your way?

**KB:** I was kind of on the fence about it. We're talking about when I was maybe 11? I knew it was going to be one of the two. I think when I really started taking acting classes and tried to sing in theaters in Philadelphia, I was a pretty driven kind, I really got out and started getting my feet wet when I was really young. I was writing songs and my brother was already off to the races on a music career and I think that for whatever reason I should probably do something different and that, in combination with the fact that I just loved acting, I mean I just immediately felt nurtured by it.

**JF:** Do your other siblings do anything musical or acting-wise?

**KB:** My sister Hilda was really more into music even before my brother. She was a Joni Mitchell, Judy Collins type acoustic folk singer when she was in high school. She never really pursued it as a career, but she was good. Had a really good voice and then her and my brother put together a jug band. They used to practice in our little house in Philly, so when I was a little kid — she's 10 years older and he's 9 years older than me — if you picture they're probably about 13 and 14 and I'm probably about 3, and I'm sitting on the steps to our — unfinished would be the understatement, when you talk about our basement — and they're down there playing away with jugs and washboards, you know the whole thing.

**JF:** Your brother Michael plays cello as well, correct?

**KB:** Yeah, he's a good cello player, over the years we have capitalized on that and have added it. When we first put the band together we didn't really use cello, but we use it more and more now. Michael's first band was a rock band called Peter and the Wolves when he was in college. When they broke up he came back to Philadelphia and he was in a pretty successful band that was just acoustic guitar and cello, but Michael didn't play the cello, his friend Larry played the cello. His friend Larry was like a virtuoso cello player and they were called Good News and they were great and very popular, especially in and around Philadelphia. There was a very specific kind of music scene in Philly.

**JF:** Do you both handle the songwriting in this band?

**KB:** Yes, and we used to write together, but we really don't write much together anymore.

**JF:** I am sure that is tough because of the travel and such.

**KB:** Yeah, I mean I think that when I was first starting to write, first I started writing without knowing how to play an instrument. So I was just writing melodies and lyrics and then bringing them to my

brother and he would kind of figure out the changes and structure the song. Once I started playing a little bit of guitar I just started writing on my own. Once in a while he'll send me, there's a song on our last record that he had a great, cool lyric and he had a sort of rhythm and he sort of spoke the lyric into the phone and sent it to me and I put it aside for like almost a year and one day I just kind of busted it out and said, "Now I'm kind of hearing something." In that case we co-wrote it, but he did the lyrics and I did the music, a lot of people write that way.

**JF:** Yes, I've written that way with others as well. When did you start playing guitar?

**KB:** I was probably about 13 or 14.

**JF:** That's about when I started as well. I think that's when everybody starts.

**KB:** A lot of people start when they're 14 and stop when they're 14. I'm one of those guitar players that really didn't put in the hard work and as a result, I'm sort of stuck in a certain place. I got plenty of knowledge in order to write, but that is kind of where it stopped. And that was just the process for me. Everyone has a different kind of process. There's a big difference — the 14- or 15-year-old kid who opts to not go to run around on the street or go to a baseball game or whatever, but opts to stay in his room and really shred. Then you get to a certain level that I'll never get to, but I am very happy to have any kind of facility on any kind of instrument. I don't need to tell you it's a nice thing to have.

**JF:** Has the Bacon Brother's music been used in any of your films and has he appeared in any films with you in a band capacity?

**KB:** He never appeared in any film in a band capacity. There was a time when we were constantly trying to write something and get it into one of my movies and constantly unsuccessful. It's funny, we do a song in the set now that I actually dragged out from our last record or the one before, I can't remember, that I wrote for *Tremors*. But the funny thing was at the time the movie was called *Beneath Perfection*, so the song is called "Beneath Perfection" and then they rejected the song and the movie came out and they changed the title of it. We've had a couple of songs not only in one of our movies, but in other ones as well. I wrote two songs for a movie that I did called *Telling Lies in America* that was about an early '60s DJ and a relationship, he was kind of a slimy DJ, he had this band that he was trying to promote, and they they needed a couple of '60s R&B tunes for the movie. The writer, great writer, Joe Eszterhas, wrote a title of a song that was supposed to be the hit for this young band, the song was called "Medium Rare," and I read that title and I thought that was the worst title I have ever heard for a song, so let me see if I can write it. So I ended up writing that one and another one that ended up in the movie. So that was kind of fun. I don't know if you've ever tried to specifically write in a style of an era or a kind of genre. It's kind of a fun challenge, it's not something that you necessarily get to do all the time.

**JF:** One movie I remember you playing guitar in was *Stir Of Echoes*. I think you played guitar throughout that one.

**KB:** If I remember correctly, he was a musician.

**JF:** And he was hearing a song in his head.

**KB:** Yeah, it was like "Paint It Black" or something like that. And the funny thing about it, I wrote a song for that one and it didn't end up in that movie, but i think it ended up another movie. I'll tell you a

funny story about that one was that the prop guy came to me and said, "You need to have a guitar. What kind of guitar would be lying around in this guy's house?" And I was like, hmmm, let me see, I think it would be a J-45 or a J-50 Gibson with a sunburst from the '60s. Basically thinking of a guitar that i kind of wanted (laughs) and sure enough they went out and found me one and I most definitely kept it. I still have it! So if you look at that movie I still have that J-45.

**JF:** I don't blame you. It's a nice guitar! What can we expect at the Odeum?

**KB:** It's a lot of new music. I'm sure there's a lot of new music from the last time that we played there. We are playing in a five-piece configuration. We don't have keys, but we have cello, guitars, ukulele, different kind of percussion situations, harmonica, you know, all that kind of stuff. We like to have a good time, we're looking forward to playing.

**JF:** I remember it was a fun show. How long has the band been around?

**KB:** We started in, I think, '94 or '95.

**JF:** I know that this is probably a dopey question, I know you did it when I opened for you, but do you still do the *Footloose* song and dance a bit?

**KB:** We sometimes do it.

**JF:** I am sure you are tired of it.

**KB:** Well, there's two ways of looking at it. One is that bands talk about how hard it is when fans just want to hear their hits. My feeling is that, "Shit if I had a hit I'd play it!" In our case we don't have a hit, so if it's going to give people pleasure and they're going to have a good time, just as a goof, to hear, what I like to call "The F song," sometimes we're happy to do it!

**JF:** That's good. I am sure that people like to hear that. That's the reality of the band is that as much as it's about music, you tend to be the focal point just out of default.

**KB:** I don't want to look a gift horse in the mouth. I kind of feel like, it's just a reality. I can't tell people to come in and close their eyes and pretend that I wasn't in a movie. There's nothing I can do about that. I'm happy it gets people in the seats. We don't pretend that's not part of who I am.

The Bacon Brothers play the Greenwich Odeum on July 16. For more about this show and the many others at The Odeum sizzle over to: [GreenwichOdeum.com](http://GreenwichOdeum.com)

That's it for now, thanks for reading. [www.JohnFuzek.com](http://www.JohnFuzek.com)