

The White Buffalo returns to Sisters

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

The White Buffalo is returning to the Sisters stage for the Sisters Rhythm and Brews Festival Friday, July 26. The White Buffalo, given name Jake Smith, is known for his wide vocal range with a baritone sound and the dark, narrative storytelling of his songs.

Born in Oregon, and eventually living in San Francisco, Smith picked up a guitar in his teenage years and found a passion for playing.

"I started writing songs when I knew only a few chords, and didn't realize I had such an affinity for it (songwriting)," said Smith.

Smith attended college with no real agenda, he went in as a history major potentially wanting to enter into teaching, but realized that wasn't for him and he came back to music.

"I really didn't know what or where I wanted to go, I didn't have an agenda in college and I was continuing to write," he said.

In 2002, Smith was waiting tables and living in San Francisco while also circulating a number of tape recordings of his songs, recorded on his brother's Pioneer self-recorder. These tapes went out to friends and family for gifts and as a way for people to hear the songs he had written. One of his friends in the surfing world got one of his tapes

to the director of a surf film.

"This director of the film called me out of the blue asking if he could use one of my songs in his movie," he said.

Smith, calling his musical incarnation The White Buffalo, then went down to the premiere of the movie in Southern California where he saw audience members singing along to his song in the movie.

"I was baffled by the idea that people actually liked and knew my music, that's when I felt inspired to keep going with music and made the move down south and knew I had to go for it," he said.

The White Buffalo now has around 80-plus songs to his name and has been in the music industry for 15 years.

A number of The White Buffalo's songs were featured in the FX show "Sons of Anarchy." They used so many of his narrative songs that they asked him to come in and sing on a number of tracks specifically for the show.

"It was amazing and I really felt like I became a part of that show," he said.

His songs have also been featured in other notable shows: "This is Us" and "The Punisher."

"It doesn't really matter emotionally to me that I am in a TV show, but I try to hit all the emotions for the audience with my songs and make people feel, that is my goal," he said.

Being featured in the shows

has provided a huge bump in his career.

"It is cool for people to recognize my music from one of their favorite TV shows; it helps them to get to know it," he said.

The White Buffalo came out with his most recent album "Darkest Darks, Lightest Lights," two years ago, the album containing a number of songs that are true to the title, light, happier tunes and darker tunes as well. He is in the process of recording a new record with a new producer and musician Shooter Jennings.

"These songs are coming from that same honest and emotional place," he said.

When performing shows on the road, The White Buffalo performs a range of his songs, not just ones from the most recent album.

"People connect their hearts to certain songs, and everyone has different favorite songs and ones that resonate with them, so I try to do a variety of songs for my audience," he said. "It is my job to make people feel and entertain them."



PHOTO PROVIDED

The White Buffalo will perform one set on Friday, July 26 at the Village Green in the Sisters Rhythm & Blues Festival.

The White Buffalo has been on the Sisters stage before, for the 2013 Sisters Folk Festival.

"The Sisters crowds are special and the shows are unique. At the festival, there were some rocking and wild shows, and others that were more low-key," he said. "The festival is unique in that way," he said.

Sisters also happens to be the place where Smith's parents, Jeff and Ginny Smith, live.

"It is always fun to come back and play in the town that

my parents live," he said.

Jeff and Ginny have joined him on the road a few times for shows, and recently traveled with him to some shows in Canada.

The White Buffalo will be performing one set only at the Sisters Rhythm & Brews Festival on Friday, July 26, at the Village Green. Doors open at 3:30 p.m. One-day passes are still available for Friday night and Saturday all day.

Tickets are still available to purchase online at bit.ly/SistersRhythmBrews.

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