

Judith Hill to make Sisters debut at Close to Home 2

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Judith Hill is known for her soulful lyrics and powerhouse voice. She has been praised by *Rolling Stone* for her “stellar powerhouse vocals.”

“In addition to penning and performing her own material, Judith — who wrote her first song at age 4 — has backed such artists as Stevie Wonder and the late Michael Jackson,” her website notes.

Hill was originally going to be a part of the 2020 lineup of the Sisters Folk Festival but will now be featured in the smaller socially-distanced festival concert event, *Close to Home 2*.

Judith Hill grew up surrounded by music. She was born into a musical family: Both her parents were musicians. Hill grew up listening to a lot of soul and R&B-style music whose influence can be heard in her music. Hill attended Biola University in California and got a degree in composition.

“After college I went around gigging with my

own music and singing and worked with other musicians on the road,” she said.

Before his death, she worked on Michael Jackson’s “This Is It” tour as his duet performer and sang during his memorial service.

Hill’s passion is bringing music to people as well as writing music that inspires. For Hill, that inspiration comes from having an emotional experience and moment that can only be described in a song.

“It is the ultimate high when a song perfectly describes an emotion or a feeling that nothing else can,” she said.

Hill writes story songs and enjoys finding a good groove.

“It is exciting when you find a good groove on the piano and guitar and then I write the music from there,” she said.

“The range of my musical influence goes from soul, to classic rock, to funk flavoring here and there, but it all sounds pretty soulful.”

A few years back, Hill was a contestant on the hit

competition show “The Voice.”

For Hill, the experience was really enjoyable and, she said, “just fun.”

“I made a lot of cool friends and the show sort of feels like a summer camp with everyone always together working on songs and music with their coaches,” she said.

Hill was a part of Adam Levine’s team and was eliminated before the finale of the show but still counts it as a valuable and fun experience.

“It was really cool to see how you are perceived by others on a competition show like this and it helped me to grow,” she said.

During the coronavirus pandemic, Hill has been keeping busy with studio projects and writing a wide variety of songs over the past few months.

“I have been in the studio a lot and working on new music,” she said. Hill has done a few virtual shows, but they aren’t the same for her as she is used to interacting with the audience.

“The Zoom concert is not



PHOTO BY JOE LEMKE

like a stage, at all. It is more intimate in a way, but it is different,” she said.

Hill is planning on coming out with new music in the near future including singles and a new full-length album that is in the works. Her European and U.S. tour dates were either postponed or canceled for the foreseeable future until at least 2021.

Hill was slotted to play the festival this year, but is now a part of the modified, socially-distanced folk festival event, *Close to Home 2*. She has played Portland

before, but has never been to Central Oregon.

“I love Oregon and I am very happy to be able to connect with people and share music together again for this event,” she said.

Tickets to the live event are sold out, but SFF will be broadcasting a high-quality livestream. Access is \$30, and money raised will help support the nonprofit during COVID-19. Socially-distanced watch parties encouraged! To sign up for access, go to <https://cth2.livestream.eventbrite.com>.

Livestreaming Close to Home 2

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Viewers around the world will get a taste of roots music from Sisters this weekend.

SFF is putting on a live concert event — and a livestream of the event — on the weekend of the original 2020 festival dates, September 11-13. The concert is called *Close to Home 2*.

Close to Home 2 will be a socially-distanced outdoor concert at the Sisters Artworks venue.

Performers on the bill for the weekend include: Judith Hill; John Craigie; Thunderstorm Artis; AJ Lee & Blue Summit; Kristen Grainger & True North; Jenner Fox Band; Caleb Klauder and Reeb Willms; and Central Oregon’s own, The Parnells.

Each day will be a different variation of these artists. (See daily lineup on page 16.)

“The *Close to Home* concerts are meant to be that, attracting fans from the area as well as music artists that don’t need to fly or travel real far,” said SFF Operations Manager Dave Ehle.

Not only is the festival putting on a live concert event in person, they are also providing a high-quality livestream for the event. Working with Keith Banning from Grange Recorders on the sound engineering, viewers can expect to hear every note of every artist’s song. Brian Cash of Alpine Internet will provide high-quality video resolution with different camera angles to enable viewers to feel as if they are at the event.

“Both *Close to Home* concerts that we’ve done this year sold out very quickly, so we know there’s a pent-up demand for live music right now,” said Executive Director Crista Munro. “We also know that there are a lot of people who feel very connected to the Sisters Folk Festival all over the country — and world — that can’t be here in person, and it was important to us that we create an opportunity to include them, too.”

“With COVID, we’re not wanting to encourage travel from outside the area, and attendance numbers are limited,” said Ehle. “Given

that, providing a livestream gives our wider Folk Festival audience an opportunity to participate in addition to expanding our audience to wide-reaching places so folks can see what we do, as well as support the artists through greater exposure as their livelihoods have been seriously impacted.”

The Festival has had significant success providing livestream events.

“We proved with our first two live streamed events — *My Own Two Hands* in May and the first *Close to Home* concert on August 1 — that we have the brain trust right here in Sisters to be able to put out a professionally-produced broadcast to the world,” said Munro.

“We’re proud of what we’ve reimaged for live concerts, given the state requirements and health considerations, and think we’re doing it in an innovative and safe way,” said Ehle.

Patrons can purchase the livestream access for \$30, which gives access to the whole weekend’s worth of performances. It will be available for viewing until

September 30.

Purchasers will get an email with instructions on how to access the show, each buyer will have a unique, unshareable code to enter to access the stream. Each day, viewers will log in to the livestream with the unique code to view the performances for that evening. It will be a private, embedded Vimeo-hosted video that they can maximize to their screen, share to smart TVs, etc.

“This time around, we’re really excited to have the support of the Sisters Area Chamber of Commerce to help deliver this programming to the SFF community, wherever they may be,” said Munro.

The Sisters Chamber is a presenting sponsor for the

livestream, and some of their television commercial spots about Sisters will be running during set breaks throughout the weekend furthering Sisters’ exposure beyond the community itself.

“Livestreaming is something we never thought we’d get into, but feel it’s currently a useful technology to serve our faithful fans as well as grow our audience for the future,” said Ehle.

The livestream event will begin the first day of the festivities, Friday, September 11, and run through the entire weekend. Watch live or anytime before September 30. Access to the livestream is just \$30 for all three days. For information, a broadcast schedule, or to purchase access, visit <https://cth2.livestream.eventbrite.com>.