

John Craigie makes return to Sisters

By Ceili Cornelius
Correspondent

Portland-based artist, John Craigie, is returning to the Sisters stage for the Sisters Folk Festival Close to Home 2 event — on the weekend that the festival would normally have been held.

The second weekend in September, SFF is offering a second small concert event, after the first Close to Home socially-distanced concert event on August 1 proved a success.

John Craigie was most recently on the Sisters stage for the 2019 Winter Concert Series.

“I have always loved that part of Oregon and I am excited to be back again,” said Craigie.

Craigie played the Sisters Folk Festival once before in 2014 when he was first making an impact on the music scene.

Craigie grew up in Los Angeles and got his first guitar when he was young but didn’t start seriously playing until he was in college at UC Santa Cruz in Santa Cruz, California.

“While I was at college I was playing small open mics and really beginning to write and perform,” he said.

Craigie was studying math on a path to become a math teacher, but that proved to not be his forte.

“I graduated with that degree but after an unsuccessful teaching job, I decided to go out on the road and truly pursue music,” he said.

At the time, he was based north of the San Francisco Bay and was doing small tours in the area, playing anywhere that would take him — coffee shops, house shows — and over time, he built up a following.

Since then, Craigie moved up to the Portland area and has released many albums and EPs over the years. Craigie has been described as a “modern-day troubadour” in the style of Woody Guthrie and Ramblin’ Jack Elliott. His music and performance style has been compared to John Prine, and Mitch Hedberg, with influences of Pete Seeger and Arlo Guthrie.

Craigie’s inspiration for his songs comes from life experiences.

“I write a lot about human interactions and life

events and stories I hear out on the road touring,” he said.

Craigie is very much into camping and adventures, but has never thought of himself as being a songwriter about nature and the world around him.

“I never thought of myself as a John Denver-type writing a song about a waterfall, it would have to be about a person with this waterfall,” he said.

Out on the road is where Craigie gets the most inspiration for his songs, but during these times of musical performances being on hold, he has had to adapt.

During the pandemic, with touring not happening, Craigie has taken a more relaxed approach to his writing and “recording in a relaxed way without any pressure, when normally this is a really hectic time, I am able to slow down,” he said.

Craigie has also been taking this time to connect with fans and respond to the many messages he has gotten and never been able to respond to.

“I’ve been checking those neglected inboxes and reaching out to my fans and responding back,” he said.

Craigie has done a few livestream shows from his home in Portland, but it is not his preferred medium of performance.

“It is not my favorite because I am such a storyteller songwriter that interacts with the audience, so I’ve really been trying to focus on the writing,” he said.

This summer Craigie has also been able to get out and camp a lot more than he usually can during the summer touring months.

In June of this year, Craigie released his most recent record, “Asterisk the Universe.” The record was named after the title of his math graduate thesis.

“It was about infinity and about the notion that has to do with modern faith in the fact that we do believe in infinity but it is a concept that is broad so there is an asterisk on our idea of the universe as a whole,” he said.

Craigie recorded the album with a full band to enhance the listening experience, but he usually tours and plays solo to emphasize the storytelling aspect.

Craigie is looking forward to performing some of these new songs during his

sets at the Close to Home 2 event.

“I am just excited to perform in general; this will be the first regular type of performance with an audience and other musicians in five months,” he said. “I am thankful to Sisters for putting this together safely and to have the opportunity to perform again.”

For more information, visit the Sisters Folk Festival on Instagram and Facebook as well as their website at www.sistersfolkfestival.org.



PHOTO BY BRADLEY COX

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— John Craigie

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