

GO! talent

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Bend singer-songwriter Viani finds her joy

BY JACKSON HOGAN

The Bulletin

The timing of Bend singer-songwriter Alicia Viani's self-titled debut album couldn't have been worse: April 2020, right at the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.

"It's such a huge labor of love to create an album, especially a debut," said Viani, this week's featured Central Oregon Creative Artists Relief Effort (CO CAREs) performer. "It was disappointing to have the momentum interrupted."

Still, despite this setback, Viani, 40, carried on throughout the pandemic. She performed in online, livestream concerts for charity, and eventually played some socially distanced outdoor shows.

There was a silver lining to playing her new songs online, rather than with a live audience, Viani said. She describes herself as a "shy performer" who can get anxious on stage, so the livestream shows helped her hone her performance skills, she said.

"I felt like I was just playing for myself and my friends, which helped me drop in into what I was doing and why I was doing it," Viani said. "I was less hooked by performance anxiety like, 'what are people thinking?' and all that nonsense."

Viani said she did about four livestream shows during the worst parts of the pandemic. For one of those, in March 2020, all proceeds went to local nonprofit Thrive Central Oregon to help low-income families with COVID-19 needs, she said.

Luckily, a lack of touring income wasn't a concern for Viani, who has a full-time job as a clinical therapist.



Singer-songwriter Alicia Viani is this week's featured CO CAREs artist. Submitted photo

"It was less devastating because it wasn't my career — I did (music) because it was a creative outlet," she said.

But eventually, by the winter of 2021, Viani was already back to doing live shows. But they were in COVID-safe settings — outdoors at Silver Moon Brewing's patio, or in garages at homes in Bend and Tumalo.

In February, Viani and her duo partner/bassist Mark Karwan played a private gig at

a Bend home for an anniversary. The duo serenaded the engaged couple from the home's patio in the cold — don't worry, they had their own fire pit — while the couple danced, she said.

"It was a great experience," Viani said. "Events like that remind me that music is connective and it brings joy."

Now, Viani and her band have a series of live, in-person shows lined up — including

a July Fourth concert at the On Tap food cart pod. And she said her livestream shows have taught her how to feel more comfortable on stage.

"When I started performing live again, I just felt so much joy in myself," she said. "A lot of my performance anxiety evaporated, because I was reminded of the purpose of (playing music)."

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