

# The Cosmic Crossings Concert Series

## SERIES OVERVIEW an GIG GUIDE – 2019

### Series Overview

Are you an under-appreciated original electronic music performer? Have you been searching for a place to showcase your unique musical perspective? Do your friends keep telling you that you really should get out and play some gigs? Too small for the big venues, and too “different” to play in the bars?

Now's the perfect time to spread your wings: perform at an upcoming Cosmic Crossings Concert Series – a great venue in central New Jersey! Now in our fourth season, the series is run by Nick Mellis, Mike Hunter and Ken Palmer, who all share a love of electronic music.

To take the first step: Go to [www.cosmiccrossings.org](http://www.cosmiccrossings.org) and check out the types of performers we've featured in past shows. If you think you'd fit right in, first read this entire document. Then – if everything looks good to you – contact us at [nick@cosmiccrossings.org](mailto:nick@cosmiccrossings.org) to start the process.

Be sure to include some info about yourself or your group. Send a short description, an electronic press kit, a link to your website, Bandcamp link or other links to your music, videos, or reviews... anything that would be helpful for us to see and hear who you are. If you're not all that organized or professional yet, don't worry about the details (we're not all that organized and professional yet either!). Just give us a hint of who you are and what your particular musical passion is. Our primary goal is to embrace and celebrate our fellow musical misfits at Cosmic Crossings – if every other venue has said NO to you, we're more likely to say YES!

*(Remember, though, that the Cosmic Crossings has a very limited number of openings for performances during each season, so there are no automatic acceptances into the series.)*

Here are some simple guidelines to manage expectations about performing at the Cosmic Crossings series:

#### **NUMBER ONE: YOU DON'T PAY US TO PLAY. WE DON'T PAY YOU TO PLAY.**

To be clear, these shows are run entirely by volunteers who donate their time and effort to raise money for the venue through these concerts, who in turn, generously do not charge us for its use. That means that the Unitarian Universalist Church lets us use their building for FREE, the people who organize and run these events work for FREE, and the performers play there for FREE. The admission fee and money made from the sale of beverages or snacks goes directly to the venue. We are all doing this for the love of this music and to support and promote this under-exposed genre and an under-appreciated group of wonderful musicians.

#### **NUMBER TWO: YOU MAKE A FEW DOLLARS. YOU MAKE A FEW FANS.**

The big upside is positive exposure for yourself and/or your group, without having to pay a promoter big bucks for the “privilege” of showcasing with 20 other bands. We can't pay you to perform, but we do provide the venue and publicity free of charge, and the opportunity to perform in front of an eager and open-minded audience. We strongly encourage you to sell your CDs, t-shirts and other swag at the show – you get to keep ALL proceeds from any merch sales. You also will gain exposure for yourself, both from performing, and from the pre-show publicity and media exposure, as the buzz surrounding the Cosmic Crossings series continues to grow. Post-performance publicity continues on our Facebook page with photos and clips of your performance, and we produce a live concert audio and video recording of your concert for you to keep, release, promote future gigs with, and share.

## “ANY QUESTIONS? ANYONE? ANYONE?”

### Q: WHAT IF I'VE NEVER DONE ANYTHING LIKE THIS BEFORE?

Besides practicing for your upcoming performance, and making sure you tell all your friends and relatives about it, and promising to show up and play, you don't have much to worry about. We provide the PA system and some really cool lighting and video projections, so your performance will be presented in a professional setting. Performing here is a fairly casual, mellow and non-intimidating experience, and everyone usually has a blast. The audience comes prepared to hear something new, and is very appreciative of each performer's vision.

### Q: WHAT SHOULD I BRING TO THE GIG? WHAT IF I DON'T OWN A...?

You DO have to bring your own instruments of course, and any special technical requirements, potential hurdles or concerns can be discussed and worked out well before the performance. If you have any special video or lighting effects that you've been itching to try out, bring them with you! We are very flexible – we just want everyone to be happy, to play their best, and to present themselves the way they want to be seen and heard! Talk to us though... dealing with unresolved issues on the night of the show isn't fun for anyone!

### Q: WHAT IF MY GROUP HAS “X” NUMBER OF MEMBERS?

Because stage space is limited, we really can't accommodate groups of more than 3 performers, unless you don't have a lot of equipment to set up. We prefer solo performers, duos and trios, but we might make an exception if your act really blows us away. This is based entirely on the practical limitations of the available stage space.

### Q: I REALLY DON'T DO SPACE MUSIC. WHAT IF I'M NOT ALL THAT “COSMIC”?

The name of the series conceptually refers to the fact that the performers were all “out there” in their own little worlds, stuck in some undiscovered region of the musical universe. You can imagine the Cosmic Crossings as a remote musical outpost in that vast uncharted expanse, where a diverse group of quirky lifeforms converge to make and hear some interesting new music.

As is often their fate, a lot of the “electronic” musicians end up stuck in their home studios with little or no opportunity to play in front of an audience, so the Cosmic Crossings attracted the attention of a strong local “space music” scene pretty early on, and we happily continue to welcome them. But if you're an acoustic looping singer/songwriter with an edge too sharp for the local bookstore scene, or a vocal trio singing ancient druid ditties in 7/8 time processed by a modular synthesizer – and you know that you're good – you've probably had just as tough a time finding a venue willing to host your particular musical vision as the space music players. You're “cosmic” because you're not bound by the usual restraints of what's popular or acceptable. You'll fit in with us precisely because of that quality. If this sounds like we're describing you, it's time to break out of high orbit and grab somebody's attention. Get in touch with us... we might say YES!

### Q: YOU SAID YES! SO, WHO ARE THESE OTHER PEOPLE ON THE BILL WITH ME?

You'll be sharing the stage with other talented people such as yourself, each with a unique personality and artistic quirks. Some are seasoned veterans, and some are performing their very first live show.

Sometimes the musical styles will be similar, and sometimes they might be in sharp contrast with each other (which isn't necessarily a Bad Thing!). Performers often have a preference for going on earlier or later in the evening (as in: first or last), and we'll try our best to work that out with you collectively. No act is billed or singled out as the headliner.

The gear for all of the performers will be set up across the stage at once, mainly to eliminate any setup/teardown delays (because of the complexity of many performers' rigs), and so that we can minimize breaks between performances. Remember that this is not an impersonal nightclub. This is a unique opportunity – we all gain valuable experience by participating in this *together*. A night of Cosmic Crossings music can be really *really* fun, and it's a great shared experience, where lasting friendships and new musical bonds are often formed.

## Q: HOW LONG IS MY SET?

Depending on the number of performers, prepare to play at least a 30-minute set. Even if that's only one long piece, go for it; we're used to it... actually that's pretty common with us. If you only have 30 minutes of material, that's fine too. Generally, every performer is slotted for a 45-minute set. If there are only two performances that night, that can be extended to an hour each. We try to keep the breaks between performers to 10-15 minutes, so as a logistical rule, please refrain from tearing down your gear until after everyone has performed. Besides, leaving before everyone else has played is not respectful to your fellow performers. We try not to let our concerts go past 11pm, so plan your teardown and packing up time accordingly.

If there is time at the end of the night, we've offered to squeeze in an all-performer improvisational jam as a group encore of sorts. This is purely optional... and only if all performers agree to try it. We totally understand if you're not comfortable with the thought of improvising spontaneously with a group of people you just met, but we've witnessed some musical magic happen, surprising both the performers and the audience. So, if the stars align, keep that option in mind!

## Q: I USE A SEQUENCER IN MY PERFORMANCE. IS THAT COOL WITH YOU?

As for as sequencing goes, our performers often incorporate loops, modular sequencers, backing tracks, groove boxes, laptops, and strange self-playing homebrewed mystery gadgets into their compositions. As long as your live presentation consists of mostly YOU actually playing something, as opposed to simply clicking the start button on an entirely pre-programmed performance, just about anything goes. So if you want your drum tracks to accompany your microtonal electric lute compositions, go for it!

Remember that our audience would love to hear you spread your wings. Improvisation, spontaneous deviations from your original plan, and not playing it safe are all strongly encouraged and appreciated. So let loose. Push your limits. Embrace both the happy accidents and the unplanned moments of brilliance – and have fun!

## Gig Guide

**Pre-acceptance:** After you submit your info/music/video links to us at [nick@cosmiccrossings.org](mailto:nick@cosmiccrossings.org), we will get back to you with details if we are interested in you and your music, and to discuss possible performance dates.

**Confirmation of your performance date:** Soon after being accepted to perform on a mutually-acceptable date, you'll be sent a link to fill out, sign, and submit the *Acknowledgment Of Expectations / Performance Agreement* confirmation form.

**Promotion:** We set up an Event on our Facebook page for each Cosmic Crossings concert. Please share this event on your own pages and with your friends, and continue to independently promote the gig, but please do NOT duplicate or create your own separate Facebook event, which only serves to splinter our potential audience. If there are any changes to the lineup or other last-minute news, there needs to be a single source of notifications to attendees. We will provide a link to a printable PDF flyer of the season's lineup for you to post at your local music stores and coffee shops, and we have a limited supply of full-color postcards available upon request. Spreading the word is our shared responsibility, and the more people who know about your concert, the better.

**Performance pre-planning:** Check your gear and cables to make sure you'll pack what you need. We have a limited amount of extra cables to borrow in an emergency, but try to come prepared to independently set up your rig, including extension cords and power strips. Acoustic drum sets and guitar amps are strongly discouraged.

Come prepared to mix your set from the stage with your own mixer: We are not going to attempt to mix your impressive collection of synths, which is pretty impossible anyway, given the unusual and unfamiliar non-traditional instrumentation that our performers typically bring. Only you know what you're supposed to sound like, and we'll be sure to make it sound good for the audience.

**Audio output to us:** We'll need you to provide a set of XLR (preferred) or ¼-inch cables to output a stereo connection from your mixer to our audio snake's inputs. We have some mic stands, and we can provide a microphone if you want to talk to the audience between songs. If you are playing or processing any acoustic instruments through your rig, you'll need to supply your own microphones. We will supply folding tables on which to set up your gear if needed, but you're welcome to bring your favorite gig tables yourself. You do need to bring your own keyboard and guitar stands. Again, be self-contained and prepared.

**Showing up:** Performances take place at the Universalist Unitarian Church, at 268 Washington Crossing-Pennington Rd, Titusville, New Jersey (see Google directions [here](#)). Load-in begins at 3pm day of show. You should back your car up to the front entrance to unload your gear, and then – when finished – move your car into the parking lot. There is a ramp to make transport of heavy wheeled road cases and carts easier.

**PA system:** Our PA rocks! Stereo is standard, with stage monitors, and an expanded 4-channel (2 rear speakers) quad PA is available if you're feeling adventurous. You must discuss this option with us ahead of time to iron out any possible technical issues... it's more fun when we all plan ahead together! Sound check usually runs from 5-6pm, so listen to Mike's instructions and it will go quickly and smoothly. If that goes well, there's usually a buffer of an hour or two to grab some dinner and relax... or, if it *doesn't* go so smoothly, to fix technical issues. The show starts at 8pm, so everyone usually chips in to avoid chasing down that one bad cable at 7:55!

**Video projections:** Ken generally provides programmed or live visuals, which are projected above the stage at an awesome 30-foot diagonal size. You can discuss with him what kind of style might go with your music (ambient, spacey, psychedelic, glitchy, whatever), or just leave it up to him. Guest VJs are always welcome to provide visuals for your set, so if you have a friend who wants to do that, bring him/her and their visual toy boxes along! Some of our performers have run their own live visuals right from the stage to sync with their performance, and we can accommodate that too. If you are outputting your own visuals to us, an HDMI connection is preferred. Lastly, if you have a DVD, Blu-Ray, or flash drive with a pre-recorded set of your own video content, we can play those during your set too.

**Lighting:** Our stage lighting rig is designed to enhance your performance. We prefer to side- and back-light you, so you won't ever have any spotlights or strobes blinding you. Slowly changing color washes dominate, which usually suits the music better anyway. The vibe at a Cosmic Crossings concert is generally more Pink Floyd than dance rave. Because we do a multi-camera video recording of your set, we can't have you performing in darkness – which makes for a terrible and boring music video – no matter how many LED candles you bring! Also, keep in mind that the audience came to see you perform too! Feel free to bring your own favorite lighting effect if you'd like... more lights is always good! Finally, as much as we'd love to include their use, no fog or haze machines are allowed at the venue, so don't bring them... we do have some lasers and lots of other special effects lighting to make up for it!

**Audio and video recording:** With your permission, we will record your performance and provide you with both a recording of the stereo audio feed from our mixing board and a stereo audio recording of the live room (to capture room ambiance and audience applause). We also will do a 4-camera live HD video mix of your set. We do all this not only to document what happens at the Cosmic Crossings for our own publicity purposes, but to provide you with a small thank you gift from us. Audio will be uploaded to DropBox within a week, with a link sent to you for downloading. Video post-production usually takes a bit longer because, well, we do that in our spare time, and video is just more time consuming to produce. So be patient, because we'll get you a copy of your performance... eventually!

You are also free to record your own audio and video of your performance, independent of or own efforts... redundancy is good! Of course, you retain all copyright and reuse rights to do what you want with any media produced. Past performers have released live CDs of their Cosmic Crossings show, and all we ask is to be acknowledged in the liner notes or credits. We also have an arrangement with Princeton Television for the rebroadcast of Cosmic Crossings shows, which are also all archived on their Vimeo channel.

**House rules:** There is no smoking, vaping, eating, or drinking allowed inside the venue's performance space (the sanctuary). When we follow their rules and we leave the space clean and tidy after each show, our concert series gets to continue.

**WE'LL SEE YOU SOON!**