

# MOOSE

# POP

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FESTIVAL GUIDE

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Deerhunter

photos by

## PAIGE K. PARSONS



Santigold at the Masonic Theater by Paige K. Parsons

You are widely respected in the photo community. We all recognize that watermarked ice cream cone lol. How did you get your start in concert photography, and how did you choose your logo?

Initially my photography was a hobby in the early 2000's while I worked as a successful software interaction designer. I took a lot of photos in college, including shooting for my school paper, The MIT Tech. I've always loved music, and I returned to my love of photography when the transition to a digital medium made it possible to work without a darkroom. My hobby became a career direction when I met up with Matt Allen, aka The Ice Cream Man, at Lollapalooza in 2007. That was my first music festival, and I was hooked. For the next several years, I shot shows almost exclusively for Ice Cream Man. The Ice Cream Man organization only had one goal - to give away a half a million free bars of ice cream. It was a phenomenal group of passionate people, and there's nothing better than bringing joy to people by giving out free ice cream, with no strings attached. I ran the Ice Cream Man organization in the Bay Area for more than a decade, so at festivals you'd usually find me with a camera in one hand and a cooler of ice cream in



Father John Misty by Paige K. Parsons

the other. The ice-cream-cone logo is a tribute to my formative years with Ice Cream Man, and a reminder to always be compassionate and kind.



**This is our 26th festival year, that's a lot of shows!  
What was the first show you shot for Noise Pop?**

My first Noise Pop shoot was the very first Treasure Island Music Festival way back in 2007. I was shooting for Ice Cream Man, and we paired up with Noise Pop to get all the festival goers ice cream on their way out of the event. I think the first show I shot for Noise Pop was Noise Pop 2009, it was Deerhunter at Bimbos, so I guess this year is my tenth shooting for Noise Pop! I immediately felt welcomed into the organization, and I learned so much from Peter Ellenby in particular. He is incredibly talented and prolific, and laid the groundwork for photography at Noise Pop. When he moved to Portland five years ago, I had the challenging and rewarding job of filling his shoes.

*"My photos are my livelihood..."*



**With 50+ events going on during the festival, how do you manage it all? What's it like shooting Noise Pop Festival?**

It's all about planning, and hiring a team of photographers that I trust. I spend a huge amount of time before the festival working with my crew of fourteen photographers to make sure we've got all 170 bands, the dozen films, and all the happy hours covered, in some cases by multiple photographers. That way when the festival rolls around, I am in the enviable position of being able to bounce from show

to show, catching an opener here, a headliner there. On a well-timed night, I'll hit four different shows. It's really exciting to see so much good music for seven days straight. The week after I do nothing but sleep (and edit photos!).

**I can only imagine all the magical shows you've been to in your career, what's one of the most memorable moments in the photo pit?**

One of my favorite moments was when I was hired by Bjork to document her Biophilia residency at The Craneway Pavilion. It was

exciting to be the only photographer



documenting her performances, and unique in that she wanted to sit down with me at the end of the night to approve images.

**I get a lot of emails from concert photographers asking to cover shows, it seems like more and more people are shooting these days. How has concert photography changed over the years?**

The ubiquity of camera phones and the price drop in DSLRs has made it so most people have the ability to photograph a show. Many times folks in the front row can get shots on par with the professionals. The downside is that many people in the audience are more focused on

their cameras than they are in watching the performance. It's always great to be at that rare show where everyone has their devices away and the performance takes center stage.

**Noise Pop Festival is unique in the sense that we take over most of the venues in the Bay Area for a whole week. What's your favorite venue to photograph in?**

I might be a bit biased, but nothing beats The Fillmore. There is a real living soul to that place. It has the heart and vibe of a tiny venue, but has great lighting, and sound on par with the largest venues



The Cure by Paige K. Parsons

around. The staff are professional and passionate, and bands are always humbled to perform in such a historic venue. I've been the house photographer there for the past five years, and I feel lucky to shoot there every time I walk through the door.

**Did you see that video of Josh Homme kicking the photographer? How's the relationship between artist and photographer... what's it like in the pit?**

I did see that horrible video. I watched it several times, as I couldn't believe what I was seeing. I felt such compassion for that photographer, and I still don't understand what would compel Josh Homme to physically abuse a photographer in that way. Normally performers are incredibly respectful of all the photographers in the photo pit, and they often watch out for us, as we watch out for them. The biggest issue is that more and more artists and their management are asking photographers to sign "rights grabbing" photo releases before we are allowed to shoot.

**So I gotta ask...what do you do with all those photos?**

I back them up! Seriously. My photos are my livelihood, and I invest to be sure I don't lose them. I usually delete more than half of what I shoot, but still end up with an archive of about 100,000 pictures a year. I'm fortunate that I have a technical background and my husband is a computer scientist, so we have about 50 TB of onsite storage, with multiple layers of protection, including offsite backups. I also make it a priority to exhibit fine art prints of some of my favorite images a couple times a year. Noise Pop puts on a group photo show every February in conjunction with the festival. Rachel Frothingham manages to rally us in a unique and interesting direction every year. It's a great opportunity to look back at my body of work and collaborate with the other





Yeah Yeah Yeahs by Paige K. Parsons

talented Noise Pop photographers to celebrate a different aspect of the festival. In addition, I produce prints for the Fillmore's wall of fame in their lobby, as well as an image or two for other small art shows around the Bay Area

Ok, here's one of those "If you had all the money in the world" type of questions. If you had the access, what would be your dream show to shoot?

I feel really fortunate to already have great access. If we're going to wish for a shoot, I'd like to wave a "magic wand" and resurrect some of the legends that are gone. I'd hire myself as the house photographer for a festival in Golden Gate Park with Jimmy Hendrix, Janis Joplin, The Beatles, Nick Drake, The Doors, Elvis Presley, and Nirvana. How's that for a lineup?

Thanks for sharing your story--any words of encouragement for amateurs looking to get into the pros?

There are so many opportunities to shoot--if you're serious about getting into concert photography,

just take the plunge. In many of the smallest clubs you don't even need a photo pass. Check out the many online resources such as [ishootshows.com](http://ishootshows.com) and learn to be respectful with your camera, both to the performers and to your fellow patrons. Build up a portfolio of your best shots, and get feedback from others. The more you shoot, the better you become. It doesn't take a lot of fancy equipment, but it does take skill and practice. Hope to see you in the photo pit!



Paige K. Parsons in Action by Mike Rosati



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TO SEE YOU  
AT A SHOW!**

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