

Alumni profile

Paige K. Parsons '90

Rock photographer documents a changing scene.

by **Joe McGonegal**

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On a typical night, Paige K. Parsons stands between a rock band and a sea of photo-snapping fans. From the photographers’ pit at hundreds of concerts over the past quarter-century, she has witnessed profound changes in both the music industry and the photography that documents it.

Whether shooting Bono or Björk, Madonna or Morrissey, Parsons is a music fan at heart. Based near San Francisco, she loves shooting at the Rickshaw Stop, the Bottom of the Hill, and the Fillmore, where she became the house photographer in 2012. During festival season, she and her Nikon D4 are at gatherings including Lollapalooza, and her fans see her work in *Rolling Stone*, the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *San Francisco Chronicle*.



At MIT, Parsons penned witty critiques of rock performances for the Tech. She called an Elvis Costello show “spectacular” but panned Love and Rockets for a monotonous performance at the Orpheum.

After studying art and design as an architecture major, she began her career as a user-interface designer at Apple and Netscape in the 1990s. In the 2000s, she helped startups with information architecture and Web design while pursuing her freelance photography career in earnest. Then, in 2007, she shot Lollapalooza. “Matt Allen and the Ice Cream Man organization gave me my first big break into the world of festival photography,” she says.

Now Parsons makes a living in photography. She recently held her first solo show in the Bay Area and hopes to publish a collection of her work in print soon.

Though she continues to enjoy what she does, she doesn’t love all the developments she’s witnessed. “Indie music is just a moniker now,” she says. “It’s not independent in any way.” Meanwhile, she sees fewer professional cameras in the pit and more point-and-shoots. Beyond the pit, a throng of glowing screens has changed her artistic landscape.

“So many artists are saying ‘Put them down,’” Parsons says of mobile devices. “I can’t agree more. I understand how everyone wants to capture a memory, but it blocks views and keeps fans from being present in the moment.”

When not on the road, Parsons serves as photographer for the Clayman Institute for Gender Research at Stanford, blogs at [The Color Awesome](#), and raises her two children, 11 and 15. “Although they would rather be home on the computer, over the past year, I’ve finally convinced them to attend a concert with me and enjoy live music,” she says.

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