

## Entertainment

### MUSICIAN SERIOUSLY INTERESTED IN CHANGE

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Patrice Pike will perform with Megan Slankard and Glenn McGregor on Friday at the Black Bart Playhouse in Murphys. Courtesy of Patrice Pike

By **Tony Sauro**

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While Pink was singing and revolving above the stage in a big, diaper-like contraption on national TV in Los Angeles, Patrice Pike was cooking an all-organic, vegan enchilada casserole - "my favorite" - at a house concert in Denver.

Sustainability - not the celebrity and borderline absurdity displayed during Sunday's Grammy Awards TV show - is Pike's artistic and lifestyle recipe. It would be difficult to find a starker show-biz contrast.

"This is where it's at for us," said Pike, 39, an articulate, concerned and unassuming singer-songwriter from Austin, Texas, who's just as interested in and committed to environmental harmony as the musical kind. "We all know this is important, and it's kind of the heart on our sleeves. We put it out there, whether we're celebrated for it or discounted for it. However.

"You know how people say of musicians: 'Just write your songs, do your music and leave us alone'? But when they see us experiencing joy - and people can see that really, truly in you - they are attracted to that and want to see why you're so joyful and what you do. That's what creates change that's lasting."

Pike, who plays Friday night at the Black Bart Playhouse in Murphys, has gone through her share of changes.

What she finds most joyful is making music with her friends, cultivating a devoted audience and working with homeless teenagers being assisted by her Grace Foundation of Texas.

A vegetarian, she meditates and practices yoga - which helps her stay calm and centered in confining situations on the road - snowboards, surfs, runs and travels the world in nonmusical contexts.

She's sustained her own musical community quite well, being named to the Austin Music Hall of Fame and winning four Austin Music Awards (including musician of the year) in 2007.

Initially a member of Sister 7, an Austin-based, "next big thing" rock band that experienced major-label success while releasing five albums from 1994 to 2000, Pike - whose step-dad, Austin musician Steve Davis, let her hang out in the recording studio as a child- has pursued a solo career since then.

She's collaborated occasionally with former Sister 7 bandmate Wayne Sutton and started a record label (ZainWayne) with him. "Zain" is Pike's nickname.

She detoured unsuccessfully - and somewhat uncharacteristically - into reality TV in 2006 (CBS' "Rockstar Supernova," an interactive game show) but is back to more sustainable basics now.

"I'm such an optimist that I believed the show would see value in who I am as a person," Pike said. "And that my personality and perspective would be interesting because it was counter cultural to a lot of other people on the show."

That didn't happen:

"Fortunately, there are a lot of people who love my work and value what I am in the world, and that ended up shining through in the end. I'm grateful."

She expresses similar appreciation for her fellow musicians - including Megan Slankard, 25, the Bay Area singer-songwriter who grew up in Tracy and opens Friday's show - and acquaintances who choose not to abuse the planet.

Pike, taking a 10-day break from recording her fourth album, has been on a mini-tour, doing intimate, small-scale shows with Austin bass player Glenn McGregor.

"I've never done duos with a bass player before," she said. "Glenn is one of the most flexible yet solid players. He's totally open to taking different approaches."

They've also been videotaping their thoughts, impressions, ideas, historical perspectives and aspirations during informal conversations with other musicians and friends committed to pursuing lifestyles that sustain the Earth's environment.

"This is what my story is," Pike said from Las Vegas, where she and a friend - Kye Brackett, a choreographer for Barry Manilow - were taping discussions on everything from World War II's impact and tragic legacy to "creating community and how it can be done, even in this world (Las Vegas) that seems so contrary to sustainability."

"I'm optimistic from the point of view of witnessing up close and personal that there are pockets where people are creating communities and livelihoods in a way that's sustainable. This exhibits that it's happening. That's hopeful."

Her somewhat spontaneous trip has included performing at an "upscale wine bar" in Stillwater, Okla., after she'd discussed global sustainability with Oklahoma State University students; the Sunday house concert in Denver that included "free-range chicken tenders and organic local foods"; a stop in Las Vegas to philosophize on tape; Friday's acoustic show; and a Sunday gig at a tiny club (the Cosmic) in Placerville.

It's all part of an ongoing project documenting changing attitudes and environments that's being led by Pride Wright, 50, an Arnold resident who formerly published the Harbinger magazine and has started a Web site [Brushwoodlounge.com](http://Brushwoodlounge.com) to help sustain his mission.

When Pike gets back to Austin, she'll head to Sutton's rural studio and continue work on her unnamed new album, which she hopes to release in July.

Playing guitar, keyboards, drums and bass and recording with a "really flexible" six-member band, she said the album is focusing more on her powerfully expressive vocals.

"A record almost never really comes out exactly the way you want it to," Pike said of her first album since 2006's "Unraveling." "It's similar to my past albums. I really like to make my music pretty deliberate. Sort of literal. I'm not really into writing songs where people have to guess what I'm talking about. I like to communicate clearly. I'm telling stories."

She's not preaching, though. Pike said she and her musical friends are just doing what they can - in small, personal, maybe musical ways - to protect the planet.

"Some of us have had numerous opportunities to compromise our quality of life in exchange for a whole lot of money, fame and things," Pike said. "We've discovered - and this is not just a pat on the back - that what makes us happy is to make our art first. If it feels whole and eclectic, what will come from that will be abundance."

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