

Environmentalism lives life under the rainbow

'Earth Mama' circles globe with educational songs about how to save it

By BONNIE BURCH
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BRENTWOOD, TN — In a town where musical residents who are well known for singing about broken hearts left in Texas, pickup trucks and honky-tonks, Joyce Johnson Rouse is a performer with a different message.

The love in her songs isn't a country boy with a city swagger, it's Mother Nature.

Rouse, who is known as **Earth Mama** as she travels the globe to bring environmental education to the forefront, says she hopes "to heal the planet one song at a time."

"We've got to save the Earth because, as far as we know, it's the only planet with chocolate," she said.

She's a singer with a serious message. Yet, the environmental advocate tries to make it fun by infusing her work and performances with eco-friendly humor, dance and energy.

There's a big emphasis on audience participation as well. And audiences range from elementary school students all the way to retired Catholic nuns.

But Rouse doesn't mind if she's caught foisting a plush globe into a crowd one day, or the next, dancing with a feather boa around her neck. She laughs often.

"If I look a little silly, that's all right. It's just my way of saving the world," she said.

Recently, she released her fifth CD, **Under The Rainbow**, an 11-song set which includes self-penned songs "Somebody's Habitat", about the clear-cutting of trees on the Cumberland Plateau, and "Wind, Wing and Wave", co-written with the help of the students at Kualapuu

Joyce Johnson Rouse, also known as "Earth Mama," of Brentwood is a music writer and singer who promotes environmentally friendly practices such as composting and organic gardening like those in her own backyard.

School in Molokai, Hawaii, during one of Rouse's many performance tours.

"Tunes range from hot Latin to tongue-in-cheek organic folk, and a very fresh arrangement of a popular hymn by Siberius, Finlandia ("Song of Peace"). We finally found a label to describe Earth Mama music—organic-eco-pop-folk-cabaret," she said.

But a favorite work is the title track, "Under The Rainbow".

"I, like many others, have always loved the song "Over the Rainbow". One day, sitting at my piano where I was writing, I was thinking about the latest sad news of war and hunger, political power plays around the world and the innocent people who suffer the results," she said.

But even while thinking about doom and gloom, her positive attitude switched away from the troubles of the day to a more encouraging vision.

"It hit me that much as we dream wistfully about how it is over the rainbow, we all live here, under the rainbow. This is where we must learn to get along and love all of our neighbors if we wish to leave a safe and healthy world for future generations," Rouse said.

The CD also celebrates 10 years performing as **Earth Mama**, a persona she took on several years after moving to Music City in 1986. She resides in Brentwood with her husband, Richard, and her 18-year-old son, Alex. Rouse also has two adult stepchildren.

And Rouse lives what she preaches in her own back yard. There's a large organic garden full of beats, watermelons and corn, which she says reminds her of the fields of her childhood in Cresco, Iowa.

Composting — which she does in her own garden — is a special project that Rouse feels fits in well

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