

Grass Roots... With A Beat

THE DAY MY HEART BROKE after learning a piece of the antarctic ice shelf had melted down, (a grim wake up call that global warming is here) along came Earth Mama, bless her heart.

Otherwise known as Joyce Rouse of Brentwood, Tennessee, Earth Mama draws her musical inspiration from the works of Brian Swimme, Thomas Berry, and other giants in the ecospirituality movement. Joyce studied them all at the Earth Literacy masters program at St. Mary of the Woods College in Indiana.

Her newest CD, *Grass Roots!*, arrived at the EARTHLIGHT review desk just in time to keep me from shriveling into complete despair. Earth Mama's music is devoted to "helping heal the planet one song at a time."

"Grass Roots!," the title song, reminded me that the grace of hope is the Holy Spirit, who often shows up in surprise packages. This time, she arrived in the guise of a bouncy boogie beat, asking "How you gonna stop a nuclear plant? Grass Roots! How you gonna protect the turtle babes? Grass Roots!" In other words, we gotta keep on with our activism. For us to fret over the top-level, out of touch politicians driven by their fossil fuel obsessions is the direct path to despair and paralysis.

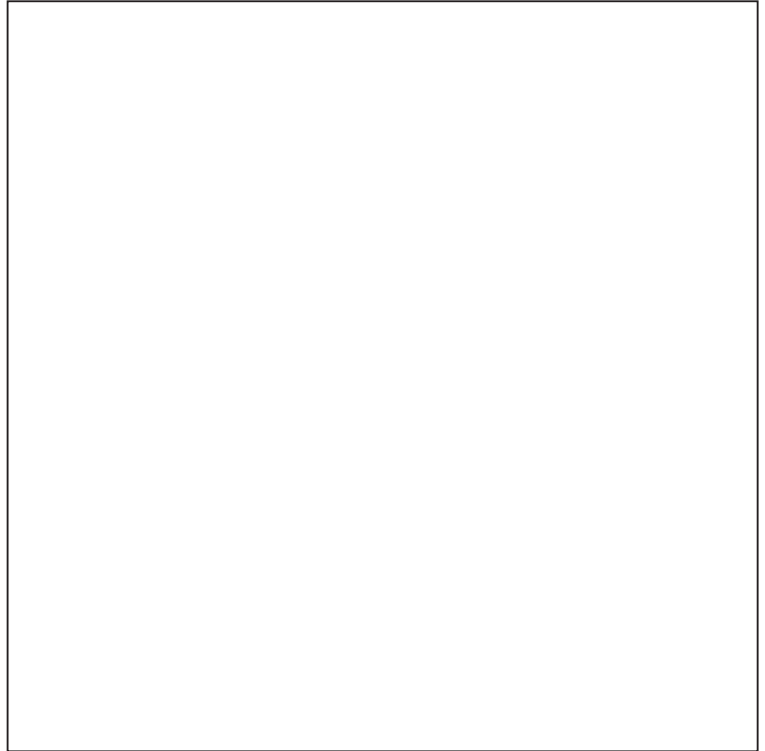
Grass Roots! gets the adrenaline pumping. "Mystery" looks at "the

Big Bang", the opening note of *The Universe Story*. Earth Mama doesn't care whether it was "physics or chemistry in space, a cosmic hiccup or a burp" which began it all. In a reflective mood, she sings, "It's a mystery, never intended to be solved. Love was involved. Let your heart feel the majesty, in the mystery of it all."

Earth Mama turns philosopher in "My Druthers," written with Dee Moeller. Given the currently distressing political climate, it is a blessing to be reminded "I'd rather stake a loser than back a lousy winner. I'd rather be forgotten than ill-remembered."

"This River" reminds us that waterways are sacred. "They have a heartbeat and a pulse. They are the story of a people / so damn the dams and free the hindered flow / Let the silver swimmers have their road."

With the spectre of the meltdown haunting me, Joyce's "Wish For The Wild Ones" gave me a bit of



respite. "Let's not say goodbye. We still have time to do what's right. Who's to say it's over? Beginnings can go on and on and on." Can they really? Scientists might say no, but sometimes singers and poets turn out to be right, after all.

"Enough Is As Good As A Feast" gently brings us back to the basic Buddhist precept that one of the chief causes of our misery is always wanting more than we have. "I don't need a mansion, or a genie to grant me a wish. I believe that he who knows he has enough is rich."

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