

ARTS

Concert:

Tracy doesn't eat squid

By Neal Vitale

"I don't know if Mercury screwed us or not... all I know is that they didn't do nothing for us, our records weren't in the stores and there weren't any ads, the average person didn't know we were alive."

Tracy Nelson, *Mother Earth*

Though *Mother Earth* has since moved to Warner Brothers/Reprise records, the turnout at the Aquarius Theater last Friday would seem to indicate that

there is still a large number of "average persons" in Boston. Despite more than adequate advertising, and a special offer of admitting college students for only \$1, less than a hundred people showed up for the first show. It's a shame, when a grossly untalented group like Grand Funk could sell out the Boston Garden at \$7.50 a seat, with no ads, in two and a half hours.

Before the show, I had a chance to talk with *Mother*

Earth's lead singer Tracy Nelson. I found her, not the "tough chick" who's on the album covers, but a kind of low-keyed, baby-faced James Taylor freak who'd offer you Jello (and did). She came on very soft, almost naive, not the type who would have eaten squid (and hasn't).

The following are a few of her random comments that may provide some insight into her, the group, and their music.

"There were... things that made me decide to leave San Francisco. The first time we ever played at the Avalon... after the set, they came up and said, 'You're pretty good, but you're not Janis Joplin.'... I kept getting people coming up almost hostile to me, like where are you at, who do you think you are, trying to sing when there's a Janis Joplin. I thought that was kind of a snotty attitude. There's room for more than one..."

"We got the same thing from Warner Brothers... 'Why don't you make a more commercial album?'"

"I don't smoke anything at all."

"I really dug *The Band*, and James Taylor's beautiful — there's not too many people currently I like very well. I think *You've Got a Friend* is just exquisite, it just kills me every time I hear that song."

"I'd like to produce; I'd like to produce Irma Thomas, I'd like to do an album... She's not signed with anybody right now, she's not recording to the best of my knowledge, she's just a great singer. Musically, most of my energy is taken up with what we [*Mother Earth*] are doing."

"I like dogs; we have a lot of dogs. They're wonderful dogs. They're all mutts and they're just great."

"[Linda Ronstadt] has an incredible voice, so pure, and so strong... She was sitting on a sofa, all kind of scrunched up in real bad posture, and hit this high note, way up there, so pure. I couldn't hit the note in a million years if I was standing up and somebody goosed me."

"Well, I'm working on a dog soap opera."

"I just did an album with Earl Scruggs; he had Linda Ronstadt and Arlo Guthrie and myself and John Hartford was supposed to do it... and Randy and Gary Scruggs."

"Carole King's not a very

good singer... she's not a developed singer."

"You're trying to make in your own thing, and when you listen to what everybody else is doing, you really get distracted from what you're doing. You naturally think that what you're doing is better than what anybody else is doing. If you didn't think that, you wouldn't be doing it. So why listen to anybody else, except for the people who influence you, who are rarely your peers in terms of time. So I really don't listen to hardly anything. I haven't even heard the last two *Beatle* albums."

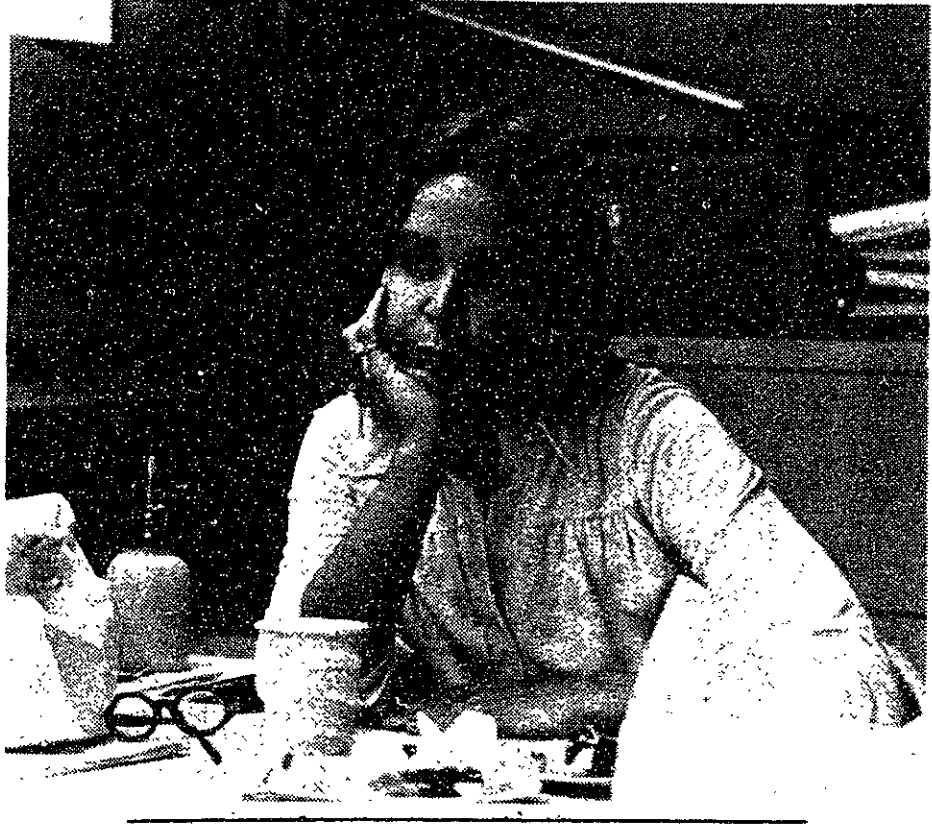
Mother Earth has undergone the usual personnel changes over the years, that have come to be common among most rock groups. Tracy Nelson is the only remaining member from the original group, as it was conceived back in the "psychedelic," "acid-rock" craze of 1967. Being from San Francisco, and having a female lead singer, they attracted more than the usual share of attention and more than the usual Jefferson Airplane/Big Brother comparisons. Whether or not the album was actually good, their first *Living With The Animals*, sold to some degree for whatever the reasons.

They've moved to Nashville, put out more albums, switched record labels, and musicians have come and gone. The group as it appeared at the Aquarius over the weekend has changed since the group's last album, *Bring Me Home*. Tracy Nelson is still on vocals, Karl Himmel's on drums, the bassist is Steve Mendel, the new lead guitarist is Jack Lee, and Andres McMahon plays keyboards. And there is a sixth member of the group, referred to (vaguely) as "Toad" and said to play "tooth." Sadly, he was absent, just having had his appendix removed.

The band showed a fairly wide range of material, ranging from rocking numbers like "I'm Satisfied" and "Temptation Took Control of Me And I Fell" to slow blues as in "Homemade Song" and "Mother Earth" to really beautiful songs such as "Tonight, I Feel the Sky's About to Cry," "Long Gone" (written by Boz Scaggs) and their new single, "Down So Low" (featuring Tracy Nelson on piano).

Unfortunately, there was just something missing. Tracy Nelson has an incredible voice, and her singing ranks her, along with Grace Slick, among the best female vocalists going. On a song like "The Sky's About to Cry," her falsetto at the end of each verse is great, and she belts a blues song as well as anyone. Friday night was no exception, as she actually sounded a bit better than she does on record. Andrew McMahon was excellent on organ, piano, and electric piano; Jack Lee was somewhat better than average on lead. Especially on the blues-rock numbers, the band seemed quite tight, though essentially playing back-up for the lead vocal.

But the electricity just wasn't there. Maybe it was the skeletal crowd, although the few there seemed to be really into it; maybe it was just a little of Tracy Nelson's coolness or fatigue or boredom showing through. Whatever, *Mother Earth* put on a very good show, although failing just short of exciting. But they are good enough to deserve a much better deal than the one Boston handed them Friday night.



Legit theatre at MIT: Dramashop & the Guild

By Bruce Marten

MIT's two student theatre groups — Dramashop and the newly-organized Musical Theatre Guild — held organization meetings this past weekend and announced their schedules for the coming year.

Dramashop, headed by Professor Joseph D. Everingham, met Friday night in Kresge Little Theater. About 40 people, many of them new to the club, attended. Following remarks by Prof. Everingham and Dramashop president John-Vandermeer '72, they were entertained with a mime presentation of Samuel Beckett's *Act Without Words*, performed by former club president Jay Torney. Afterwards, refreshments were served.

The Musical Theatre Guild attracted about 80 people to McCormick's Country Kitchen with a program including slides, tapes, singing and refreshments. Musical Theatre Committee chairman Jeff Meldman, G, said the Guild was pleased with the large turnout, and reported that 150 freshmen had indicated an interest in musical theatre, the largest representation in several years.

The turnouts for both groups indicate considerable theatrical interest among members of the Class of '75.

The Dramashop schedule this year will feature four sets of one-act plays and two full-length productions. Reflecting the contingencies of MIT's academic calendar, the fall term will contain three of the four one-act productions, often called "nine-day wonders" since they are presented nine days after casting. Dramashop will mount a major production over IAP (last year's IAP project was a highly-successful *Merchant of Venice*) for presentation in early February.

Another major production will hit the boards in late April, with a set of one-acts intervening between the major plays. All Dramashop productions take place in the Little Theater.

The first production was cast last night and will be presented Friday and Saturday nights, October 1 and 2, as part of Inaugural Week. The plays are Lanford Wilson's *The Sand Castle*, directed by Philip Bertoni '73, and *Out at Sea*, by Slawomir Mrozek, directed by Paul Pangaro '73. As is customary, they will be presented free to the public.

The Musical Theatre Guild, which absorbed three predecessor groups (Gilbert and Sullivan Society, Tech Show, and the summer Classical Musical Society) plans two full-scale productions on Kresge's main stage. The first is Gilbert and Sullivan's *Pirates of Penzance*, scheduled for November 11, 12 and 13, directed by Nancy and Mickey Rainier. Auditions are being held this week through Thursday.

The Guild's spring production will be an original Tech Show, a musical (probably comic) written, composed and directed by Guild members. (Anyone can join the Guild.) A call for scenarios will go out to MIT writers soon, probably within three weeks, according to Meldman.

Tech Show '72 will be the first original one since 1969. Lack of ambitious writers caused Tech Show to present *The Fantasticks* (a financial success) in 1970; lack of interest resulted in the organization donating its funds last spring to the Pot Luck Coffeehouse for a token production of *Jack and the Beanstalk*, and, ultimately, its merging into the Guild — which, it is hoped, will foster a revitalization of musical theatre at MIT.

