

INDIGO NOTES

JUNE 1, 1991

NEW RELEASE !!

ON TUESDAY, JUNE 4 EPIC IS SCHEDULED TO RELEASE AN EP FEATURING LIVE MATERIAL FROM THEIR RECENT NORTHEAST TOUR. THE TITLE IS SOMETHING ALONG THE LINES OF "BACK ON THE BUSY TAIL" AND CONTAINS SEVEN LIVE TRACKS, INCLUDING "PRINCE OF DARKNESS" WITH SARA LEE ON BASS, AND ONE STUDIO TRACK, "1 2 3". AMY AND EMILY WILL CROSS THE COUNTRY IN JUNE PROMOTING THE ALBUM. BE ON THE LOOKOUT FOR SHOWS, RADIO INTERVIEWS, AND OTHER GOINGS ON IN YOUR AREA!

SONG TITLE UPDATE

AT LAST! THE MISSING SONG TITLES FROM THE MARCH 1988 TAPE ARE:

SHOULD HAVE NEVER CROSSED YOUR PATH

PEACE SONG

LIVES SO RICH

AND FROM BLUE FOOD:

PEACE SONG

DRAW THE LINE

(ROACHES SONG - STILL UNKNOWN)

RUNNING FROM THE COW

DID YOU KNOW ...

CD COMPILATIONS

1989 HITCHHIKER RADIO SAGA 2 (PROMO) "I DON'T WANNA KNOW" - STUDIO
CBS ASK-1826 WITH LIVE INTRO FROM BEGINNING
OF REUNION 2 LIVE.

HITCHHIKER SAMPLER-VOLUME 2 (PROMO) "I DON'T WANNA KNOW" - STUDIO
CBS ASK-1878

THE WONDER YEARS "GET TOGETHER" STUDIO
ATLANTIC 7 82032-2

1990

HITCHHIKER EXAMPLER "MAKE IT EASIER" STUDIO
COLUMBIA CK 46036

THEODORE: AN ALTERNATIVE MUSIC SAMPLER "KID FEARS" LIVE - MAY '89
COLUMBIA/EPIC CK 46062

1991 TAME YOURSELF "I'LL GIVE YOU MY SKIN" STUDIO
RNA R2 70772 WITH MICHAEL STIFE

DEDICATED "UNCLE JOHN'S BAND" STUDIO
ARISTA ARCD-8669

HITCHHIKER EXAMPLER 2 "SOUTHLAND IN THE SPRINGTIME" - STUDIO
COLUMBIA CK 47321

★ NOTE ★ A NEW BOB DYLAN TRIBUTE FEATURING ATLANTA ARTISTS
HAS BEEN RELEASED. WHEN I HAVE MORE INFO I'LL PASS
IT ALONG.

I'm in search of greener pastures,
Don't like my garden's what I said,
Although I'm working harder than last year,
I'm still deep in the red,
I am rowing as hard as I can,
And they're selling me up a stream,
I'm always one more step away from the
American dream.

EMILY SALIERS, "MAKE IT EASIER"

ALL AROUND them was evidence that they had made it to the big time. In sequins and leather, the rock, jazz, classical, country, and gospel artists who write and perform the nation's most popular music gathered in Los Angeles this night in February to receive the highest tributes presented by the music industry, the Grammy awards. But Emily Saliers and Amy Ray, dressed in blue jeans and boots and sitting in an audience that included rock and roll superstars they had idolized as children, felt more like spectators than award nominees.

"It was great," Ray says. "We heard Stevie Wonder and Ray Charles."

"I felt like I was at a concert," Saliers pipes in. "I didn't feel like I was in the ranks of these people. These people are legends."

Do they ever see themselves in that way? "A legend?" asks Ray, making sure she's got the question right. "No way!" they answer together, the husky voice of Ray mingling with Saliers' brighter tones.

While Ray and Saliers may not yet be vying for legendary status in rock history annals, they have been

making quite a first impression on the national music scene. Based in Atlanta, they are known as the Indigo Girls, and less than two years ago, Epic Records signed the two Emory alumnae to a contract their manager described, at the time, as "an extremely good deal for a new artist." Their first major label record, *Indigo Girls*, has rocketed well past gold, selling over 750,000 copies to date. After its release in 1989, the *Boston Globe* pronounced it the "best debut album so far this year"; it was rated pop album of the week by the *New York Times* and ranked as high as sixteen on *Rolling Stone's* Top 50 Albums chart. Reviewers for the most part have praised the music of the Indigo Girls as striking, tasteful, "gorgeously wrought in melody and harmony." The Girls have consistently sold out performances to their own concerts, and they have opened shows for such well-known groups as the Athens, Georgia, band R.E.M. and rocker Neil Young. The Grammys took note of their achievements through nominations in two categories. Although they lost the best new artist award to a West German duo, they won in the contemporary folk area.

Still, Ray and Saliers seem unaffected by the whirlwind of attention. "I don't think she's changed a great deal," says Emory alumnus Larry Ray of his daughter. "Money is not her thing. Friends have always been more important to her."

"I haven't thought about the Grammy since it happened," Ray says. She still lives in the simple apartment she rented while

a student at Emory, and Saliers drives the same beat-up navy Toyota that carted her to Emory classes more than five years ago. They wear unpretentious clothes: jeans and T-shirts. They fill time off from touring with catch-up visits with friends, writing

MOODY by Rhonda Watts INDIGOS

SERIOUS LYRICS AND MESMERIZING HARMONIES

MARK THE CRITICALLY ACCLAIMED MUSIC OF

TWO EMORY ALUMNAE



The melodious tunes of Emily Saliers suit the polite, freckled guitarist whereas the hard driving songs fit her duet partner, Amy Ray, a quintessential rock-and-roller with long bangs, torn jeans, and forearm tattoo.

new songs, doing everyday chores such as laundry. "I did seventy-eight pounds of laundry today," Saliers said during one break this spring. "[My roommate and I] were going to get it done at the Duds and Suds by the Kroger, but they wanted forty-five cents a pound to do it, so we did it ourselves."

Although their schedule is booked year round, they still make time for benefit concerts — for the Georgia Center for Children and for the homeless, to name two — and an occasional local show. Last spring, to the delight of street audiences, they performed as surprise artists at a neighborhood festival in Atlanta's Little Five Points. People milling about the area saw two women in their mid-twenties, guitars in hand, take a place among vintage clothing stores, art galleries, and junk shops, and launch into "Strange Fire," a song written by Ray: "I come to you

with strange fire, I make an offering of love." Passersby stopped. "Hey, isn't that...?" "Yeah, it's the Indigo Girls," went a murmur through the growing crowd. And for a while Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, here in the open evening air, out of the national spotlight, away from concert halls with audiences of 10,000, sang their songs for local fans, just around the corner from the Little Five Points Pub where a few years before their career had begun to soar.

*Pain from pearls — hey little girl — how
much have you grown?*

*Pain from pearls — hey little girl —
flower for the ones you've known.*

Are you on fire, from the years?

What would you give for your kid fears?

AMY RAY, "KID FEARS"

RAY AND SALIERS first met as sixth graders at Laurel Ridge Elementary School in Decatur, Georgia, but they were not friends. It would be many years before music would bring them together.

Amy Ray, the third of Larry and Frances Ray's four children, grew up in suburban Decatur, in a two-story brick house across the street from Shamrock High School. As children she and her brother were inseparable; she taught him to play cowboys and Indians. At school she was a "cutup," says her mother, a homemaker who remembers Amy's teachers were always changing her daughter's seat to keep her from talking so much. "But wherever she was moved, she made a new group of friends." Outside class, Ray was also active, being elected class president in her sophomore and junior years in high school, working on the yearbook staff, and



running cross-country and track.

Music was an ever present part of Ray's childhood. She sang in the North Decatur United Methodist Church choir. She studied piano for four years and played flute with the Shamrock High marching band. One sister studied voice, and her older sister, a former medical student who now owns a wearable art clothing store in Durham, North Carolina, introduced her to the guitar. In that instrument, Ray discovered her real musical passion. She began taking guitar lessons at the YWCA at age twelve, and thereafter, says her father, a radiologist and head of the medical staff at Georgia Baptist Medical Center, she was always looking for an opportunity to perform. "Her attitude was, If you listen to me, I will play for you. She spent a lot of time in her room practicing songs by Bob Dylan and Jackson Browne. She was writing her own lyrics at fourteen or fifteen, but we never saw those." For her first professional musical gig, Ray played for a wedding reception and received thirty dollars.

Just a few miles away, Saliers lived with her parents — an Emory theology professor and a children's librarian — and her three sisters. The second oldest, Emily was the one who drew her sisters together. She was "straight man" to her younger sister, Elizabeth, the family clown. "She has always had a very tender consciousness for people who have suffered injustice," says her mother, Jane Saliers. "She is a mediator. She would fall behind in school, in the open classroom, because she would pay too much attention to other people." Nonetheless, Saliers, like Ray, was named a Senior Superlative at Shamrock High.

"She has to guard against that vulnerability," says her father, Professor of Theology and Worship Don E. Saliers. "She is a person of enormous enthusiasms. When she took up the saxophone, she thought, I'm going to learn to play it tonight." Another time, she became absorbed with a special vitamin diet.

Of all her passions, the one that

stuck was the guitar. She received her first guitar, a twenty-dollar bargain, at age eight and literally was unable to put it down, her parents remember. She also took guitar classes at the Y.

Some of Saliers' predilection for music was inherited. Her grandfather Red Saliers was a jazz musician in New York in the twenties. Her father, an ordained Methodist minister, is a composer, pianist, and organist, and directs the choir for Emory University Worship each Sunday. All four Saliers sisters sing — one is currently studying opera with a coach affiliated with the Metropolitan Opera Company in New York — and the family often enjoys informal sing-alongs, creating wild improvisations at home.

The first musical collaboration between Saliers and Ray was a performance for a high school PTA meeting. They began playing for fun, practicing in the basement at Ray's house. From there, they went on to try their luck at an open-mike night at a Buckhead bar. But just as the two were starting to combine their musical styles, Saliers, a year older than Ray, graduated and left to enter H. Sophie Newcomb College at Tulane University. The next year, Ray enrolled at Vanderbilt University.

Each of the women, unhappy at their chosen universities, decided independently to register at Emory. "I wasn't happy at Tulane," Saliers says, "and I knew I could go here for free [because of the courtesy scholarships given to the children of faculty and staff]." Ray, in her more blunt manner, says: "I hated Vanderbilt. I felt all colleges are the same, but I had friends back here." Her family also had many Emory connections: both her parents were Emory graduates, her mother from Emory College in 1959 and her father from Oxford College, Emory College, and Emory Medical School. Her late grandfather and late uncle held Emory degrees, her brother is a second-year Emory medical student, and her sister just completed an Emory residency in internal medicine. Neither Saliers

nor Ray knew of the other's decision until they came home.

At Emory they found an environment in which they could thrive. They were surrounded by family and friends; they found their classes enlightening. "The college experience is invaluable," Saliers says. "It is a blessing. You learn social skills. It opens up your world. Emory was already pretty progressive when we went there, with the Afro-American literature program, the Institute of Liberal Arts. It just meant everything." Ray joins her on "everything."

Ray pursued her mother's major of English and added a major in religion. "Dr. Boozer made the biggest impression on me," she says. At a recent memorial service for Jack S. Boozer, the late Charles Howard Candler Professor of Religion Emeritus, Emily Saliers shared the memory that the professor of theology had more than once let Ray miss class in order to play a concert, thereby helping the Indigo Girls launch their career.

Frank Manley, Charles Howard Candler Professor of Renaissance Literature, was another influential teacher for Ray. She took his introduction to literature as a freshman and later wrote what she says are some of her best songs in his creative writing class. "I encouraged her to write lyrics," Manley says. "She would label her assignments as either lyric or poem. They are different — you assume the presence of music with one." Manley, who coincidentally was a classmate of Frances Ray in grammar school, found her daughter "tremendously intense, sensitive, alert and original, ideal really. There was a high seriousness and intensity about her even as a freshman. I remember her discussing some Flannery O'Connor stories, and she was very insightful." Manley also allowed Ray to perform for class, and he found her to be "a stunning performer with a voice of great power."

Meanwhile, Saliers was immersed in courses for her English major. She enjoyed the lectures of William Dillingham and Peter Dowell in that department, as well as those of

Patricia Hilden in the Graduate Institute of Liberal Arts and John Howett in art history. She was recently surprised, but proud, to receive a congratulatory note from Floyd Watkins, Charles Howard Candler Professor Emeritus of American Literature, who, she says, "kicked my butt in Southern literature." Watkins, with a reputation among students as a salty, tough teacher, remembers Saliers as an excellent, good-natured pupil. "I never saw her unhappy, in or out of class, in any way, over a grade, over anything. That doesn't mean Emily doesn't run deep. She does."

As Ray and Saliers learned the ins and outs of university life, they once again began to play music together. They developed a following at concerts at the Dugout, a student hang-out in Emory Village that has since closed, where they played the songs of musicians such as James Taylor, Billy Joel, and Jackson Browne. They also began playing their own music, Saliers' "Crazy Game" or Ray's "No Way to Treat a Friend." Each had a following of groupies, but now their fans began to merge. Their music became less Amy's songs or Emily's songs, melding instead into their songs. And with the emergence of their identity as a team came a name for their duo, which they arrived at by thumbing through a dictionary. "My name is Amy Ray, and this is Emily Saliers," Ray announces on a tape recorded at the Dugout in 1985. "We're calling ourselves the Indigo Girls. Y'all take it easy." "Take it easy," Saliers throws in. "And we'll be right back."

I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains

I looked to the children, I drank from the fountain

There's more than one answer to these questions pointing me in a crooked line

The less I seek my source for some definitive

The closer I am to fine.

EMILY SALIERS, "CLOSER TO FINE"

COLLEGE-TOWN musicians are a dime a dozen. It seems every campus has its duo, quartet, or band — groups that draw students together at nearby clubs. They enjoy an enthusiastic following for four years, but around commencement time they seem to peter out, breaking up to take "real-life" jobs, as their fans, too, go their own way.

But the Indigo Girls were not just any collegiate duet. Besides mesmerizing harmonies some have compared to those of Simon and Garfunkel, another thing that distinguished them was their desire to succeed. Ray knew she wanted to try to make a living by writing and playing her own music. "It was never even a question for me," she says with typical directness. Saliers, a Phi Beta Kappa scholar, was torn between music and graduate school. "Amy gave me an ultimatum," she says. "Once I did commit to it, I never looked back. I never regretted it."

Their parents were supportive. "Go ahead and try it," Don Saliers advised his daughter. "You'll never know what you might have been if you don't." But behind the support was natural parental worry. "We never felt they wouldn't make it in their own sphere," Jane Saliers said recently, "but one always wondered how long it would last." Frances Ray was also concerned: "We were really afraid Amy would be disappointed. We felt she would be hurt."

Larry Ray remembers counseling his daughter, "There are a hundred million people doing this. And we can't help you," he told her. "We didn't have any connections to the music business. I had no idea where to begin. But she did it on her own. She didn't ask our advice. She didn't seem worried. She was very confident she could make a living."

Despite the chanciness of their chosen profession, the Indigo Girls have never had to struggle to make ends meet. Although Saliers worked part time as a travel agent while Ray finished college, she took that job more or less for fun. During Ray's last

year, the duo began to be booked regularly in Atlanta clubs, at the Dug-out, the Trackside Tavern in Decatur, and the Little Five Points Pub.

In 1985 the Indigo Girls released their first single, "Crazy Game," written by Saliers:

*Crazy game, I never should have
started to play,
but now you couldn't tear me away,
cause love is sweet, sweet baby.
So good to you and so bad I fear,
the situation's clear before my eyes.
Confusion wants to break me and it
tries.
But I've been a little bit stronger from
the start.
Listen to my heart.*

The next year they released an extended play record produced by Drivin' and Cryin' band member Frank French. They followed that release in 1987 with another on their homespun Indigo label, this time a full-length album, *Strange Fire*, recorded as a demo in an Athens studio and produced by guitarist John Keane.

By now the Indigo Girls were developing a regional following. They mailed their demo to radio stations, telephoning disc jockeys to ask for air play. When they weren't performing, they were promoting themselves, a necessary chore but one that grated against Saliers' natural reserve. They sang in other college towns, in Durham and Chapel Hill, where Ray's sister talked up their appearance, and in Athens, where by luck they met R.E.M. lead singer Michael Stipe.

The Indigo Girls' success story is tied to that of R.E.M. While Epic producer Roger Klein was in Athens to negotiate a contract with R.E.M., he decided to make the hour-and-a-half journey to Atlanta to hear the Indigos at the Little Five Points Pub. Klein ended up signing both groups. Since then the two bands have toured together and shared a record producer, Scott Litt. On their first Epic album, the Indigo Girls called on the talents of Stipe and other R.E.M.

members as backup vocalists and instrumentalists.

That album earned them praise throughout the music industry. *Spin* critic Karen Schoemer dubbed *Indigo Girls* "an emotionally articulate, stunning work produced with subtlety and dynamic discretion." The *Los Angeles Herald Examiner* ran the headline: "Indigo Girls: Color them brilliant." Jimmy Guterman wrote in *Rolling Stone*: "Amy Ray and Emily Saliers are ideal duet partners. Their voices soar and swoop as one, alternately raucous and soothing, and when they sing together, they radiate a sense of shared purpose that adds muscle to their lanky, deeply felt folk-tinged pop songs. These ten tunes, framed by the acoustic guitars of the two Georgian women, make a worthy major-label debut."

*You can go to the East to find your inner
hemisphere*

*You say we're under the same sky babe,
You're bound to realize, Honey, it's not
that clear.*

I'm not your promise land

I'm not your promise one

*I'm not your Land of Canaan,
sweetheart.*

Waiting for you under the sun.

I'm lonely tonight, I'm missing you now.

*I'm wanting your love and you're giving
it out.*

*I'm lonely tonight, I'm lonely tonight,
I'm lonely tonight.*

AMY RAY, "LAND OF CANAAN"

IT'S THE ONE with farm animals in front," says Saliers, giving instructions to Amy Ray's apartment, where the Indigo Girls are practicing this afternoon. Sure enough, in a tract of low, squat buildings, one yard displays three wooden

pigs, a rooster, some ducks. A real black and white cat, finished with his nap on the miniature farm, stretches, winds around a plastic flamingo, and sidles to a metal door that is screened. Ray opens the door for the cat — a stray she has adopted and named Scout — and inside he meanders, sniffing the brown sculpted shag carpet, then picking his way around guitar cases to settle in a chair that looks as if it is a favorite scratching post. Around him is an eclectic collection of junk shop knickknacks: an Elvis portrait on black velvet, a cat clock whose eyes and tail move as it tick-tocks, a Jesus statue, a Donald Duck toy, a crucifix encased in a glass dome with colored lights. Indigo Girls records are glued on the wall, along with one by Michelle Malone, Ray's ex-roommate who now has a contract with Arista Records.

Saliers, polite, freckled, with strawberry blond curls, settles on a nondescript tan sofa beside Ray, who looks more like a rock and roller with her long brown bangs, torn blue jeans, and forearm tattoo. "It's weird now," Saliers says. "We're on a long break." For the past year the two have been traveling close to three weeks a month, performing at their own headline concerts or opening for other groups such as the Violent Femmes. That schedule has suited Ray, who writes new works in bits and pieces, better than Saliers, who prefers to write songs all at once, in one long session. "I may never write a song again," she says.

They are using their break to collect material for the next album, which they plan to start recording in Los Angeles this summer at the historic Ocean Way Studio. "We have enough material, but I want my next songs to be more mature," Saliers says. "Yeah, me too," says Ray picking up a plastic squirt gun and taking a playful shot at one of the four cats in the room, a manx named Dennis.

It is not surprising to hear the Indigo Girls talk about making mature, serious music. Their trademark has become intelligent, thoughtful songs that deal with interpersonal



To the delight of street audiences, the Indigo Girls performed at the Little Five Points neighborhood festival in Atlanta last spring.

relationships and values. For their inspiration they draw on literature, the Bible, their life experiences, their friends. "Most of the songs have a stream running through them about how to persevere," Ray says. "In every life is joy and pain," Saliers says, and Ray picks up: "My songs are sometimes autobiographical, sometimes taken from the experiences of my friends' lives. Every human being has a dark thing inside them. You feel like you understand that even if you haven't experienced it." Saliers nods agreement.

Both sets of Indigo Girls' parents feel their daughters' sincerity has been key to their success. "The audience feels that they care about each person. They sense their interest," Frances Ray says. "They sang their way into people's hearts," says Jane Saliers. "When people see them perform, they sense a directness and a lack of artifice."

If that seriousness is their strength, it may also be their weakness, at least according to the music critics. "Their gloomy lyrics tend to be a bit too self-serious," wrote Stephen Holden in the *New York Times*. *Rolling Stone*

critic Guterman wrote that "because they mean each song to be 'serious,' they feel compelled to drop lifeless 'meaningful' lines . . . that frequently undermine the power of delivery." Critic Jon Pareles was not as kind, calling the Girls the "new standard-bearers" of "earnest pretentiousness."

"When the reviews came out, they bothered us," Saliers admits. "We weren't used to criticism. But after getting letters from people, their calls, saying how much the music spoke to them, then it didn't bother us anymore. That's what it's all about."

"Yeah," says Ray. "After all, critics are only frustrated musicians."

The Indigo Girls refuse to apologize for their seriousness. It is too much a part of who they are. They believe in good causes — they support Greenpeace, People for Ethical Treatment of Animals, the Coalition for the Homeless, Amnesty International — in their friends, and in their families. "My family is everything to me," says Saliers, who wrote "History of Us," the last song on the Indigo Girls album, after touring Europe in a Volkswagen bus with her parents and sisters in 1985. She dedicated

that song to them.

"Music is intertwined with my life," she says, "but I have other things going on."

"It's my life," says Amy Ray. □

*Jeu de Patience's full of faces knowing
peace, knowing strife*

*Leisure and toil, still it's canvas and oil
There's just no medium for life*

*In the midst of the rubble I felt a sense
of rebirth*

*In a dusty cathedral the living God called
And I prayed for my life here on earth.*

*So we must love while these moments
are still called today*

*Take part in the pain of this passion play
Stretching our youth as we must, until*

we are ashes to dust

Until time makes history of us.

EMILY SALIERS, "HISTORY OF US"