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THE NEW ALBUM?

Based on Amy and Emily's performances this fall, Ron McBay of Atlanta has put together this probable track list for the new album:

Amy

Fugitive = Hide Yourself For Me = All For You

Reunion = Pretty Pretenders = (I've Got) Nothing To Hide

Dead Man's Hill = Don't You Write It Down (Remember This In Your Head)

This Train (Is Bound For Glory) = The Holocaust Song

Touch Me (I'm So Beautiful) = The Electric Guitar Song

Emily

Fare The Well

Learning = Clean-Slated = Least Complicated

The Wood Song = If The Weather Holds

Power Of Two = Out In The Country

Table For Six

Everything Changes

From The Dallas Morning News, December 6, 1993:

Rock stars provide songs for AIDS film soundtrack

By Craig Rosen

Billboard

LOS ANGELES — While TriStar Pictures is betting that the star power of Tom Hanks and Denzel Washington will make the consciousness-raising AIDS drama *Philadelphia* a hit at the box office, Epic Soundtrax is optimistic that songs by Bruce Springsteen and Neil Young will have a similar effect on its soundtrack.

Streets of Philadelphia, the first song Mr. Springsteen has written and performed for a film, and Neil Young's *Philadelphia*, also written specifically for the movie, are heard in their entirety in the film.

The stark and somber Springsteen cut plays during the opening scene, while Mr. Young's poignant piano ballad serves as backdrop to the movie's climax.

The film, directed by Academy Award winner Jonathan Demme, is the first major studio feature to deal with AIDS and the discrimination faced by those afflicted with the disease.

The soundtrack also includes songs by Peter Gabriel, Sade, Spin Doctors and Indigo Girls, as well as an aria performed by the late Maria Callas and a score piece by Howard Shore. It is slated for release Jan. 4.

The struggle faced by the film's main character, an attorney played by Mr. Hanks, who loses his job after his employer discovers he has AIDS, is reflected in the lyrics of both the Springsteen and Young cuts.

In the opening track, Mr. Springsteen sings, "I saw my reflection in a window / I didn't know my own face / Oh brother are you gonna leave me wastin' away." Mr. Young offers, "City of Brotherly Love / Place I call home / Don't turn your back on me."



Bruce Springsteen

Mr. Springsteen's longtime producer Chuck Plotkin says the artist initially didn't commit to doing the soundtrack, but was so moved by Mr. Demme's description of the film that he entered his home studio to write what would become *Streets of Philadelphia*. Says Mr. Plotkin, "Jonathan told him not simply about the story, but about the atmosphere and the main character in such sufficient depth that it began to work on Bruce."

Mr. Springsteen recorded a demo at his home in Los Angeles, with a drum machine, synthesizer, his guitar and vocals. In later sessions, Mr. Plotkin and Mr. Springsteen attempted to dress up the track with live drums and other instrumentation, but ultimately went with the original demo.

"Tommy Simms, who played bass on the last tour, added background vocals," Mr. Plotkin says. "That's the only thing that Bruce didn't actually do himself that survived."

Mr. Landau adds that both he and Mr. Springsteen admired the way Mr. Demme used music in his previous films. "Jonathan always uses music in a very authentic, non-exploitive fashion," he says.

Favorite Releases Of '93

From Karin Dalesky of Tacoma, Washington:

The Breeders - Last Splash
Wendy Bucklew - Painting Sidewalks
Neil Young - Harvest Moon
Caroline Aiken - Live At Eddie's Attic
Melissa Etheridge - Yes I Am
Michelle Malone - New Experience (Re-issue)
Nirvana - In Utero
The Ellen James Society - Everything/Amsterdam (45)
Nanci Griffith - Other Voices, Other Rooms
Michelle Malone - For You, Not Them

*Note: I have yet to hear the new releases from Ashley and Mark, Pearl Jam, or the Cowboy Junkies, or it would reflect in my list. Too bad there was nothing new from Mary-Chapin, R.E.M., Michelle Shocked, or THE GIRLS (WILD, WILD PARTY...Well, it's fun and all, but a mere morsel for us HUNGRY Indigo hardcores...)

From Carolyn Spidle of Plano, Texas:

Jackson Browne - I'm Alive
Pierce Pettis - Chase The Buffalo
Ashley and Mark - Live By The Dollar
Caroline Aiken - Live At Eddie's Attic
Wendy Bucklew - Painting Sidewalks
Steve Earle - Essential Steve Earle
Melissa Etheridge - Yes I Am
Mark Chestnutt - Almost Goodbye
Doug Supernaw - Red And Rio Grande
Nanci Griffith - Other Voices, Other Rooms
Rodney Crowell - Greatest Hits
Asleep At The Wheel - Tribute To Bob Wills

Looking Back - Part Three

Before turning the rest of this issue over to the "Looking Back" series, I do have a little more news to pass along.

Dede Vogt has just released a new CD on Daemon. I haven't received my copy yet, but word out of Atlanta is that it is super. It is available from Daemon records for \$12 postpaid.

Amy and Emily were spotted around Atlanta in early December, it was not clear if they were taking a break from recording or if the new album is finished.

From the rumor mill (remember the rumors of a live \$10 tour album before you take these too seriously):

One of the songs on the new album contains flutes.

The new album is musically unlike anything they have done before.

Amy may be considering releasing a solo album in 1994 on her own label, Daemon records.

A group of Atlanta musicians (possibly including Amy and Emily) may release a Traveling Wiburies (spelling?) type album on Daemon records in 1994.

Guess that's it for this issue, take care and be well -

CAROLYN ☺

From The Philadelphia Inquirer, August 7, 1989:

Anxieties and lost loves from the Indigo Girls

By Jim Gladstone
Special to The Inquirer

Coming at the end of one of summer's hottest, most bothersome weekends, the Indigo Girls' performance at the Theater of Living Arts last night was a much needed blast of musical (and attitudinal) air conditioning.

The often angry vigor of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers' acoustic guitar strumming was cosseted and cooled by the duo's insistence on refining raw emotion. While their taut, woody voices regularly dovetailed in peevish and poignant harmony, their compositions about lost loves and creeping anxieties always had a well-finished feel. And this kept them from sloshing into the bathetic puddle of true confessions that muddies the output of so many folk acts.

Fine details like Saliers' gorgeous-

Review: Music

ly slow introduction to "Love's Recovery" and a dueling blues break in the midst of Gershwin's "Summertime" lent an air of completeness to the music that allowed the women to step away and banter cheerfully — and just as sincerely — with the audience between songs. Engaging and witty, their chatter felt like the Indigo-gos.

Thanks to their mature ability to separate the art from the artist, the Indigo Girls don't feel the need to bleed on their audience. They just sing to them. And beautifully.

Here's a folk act that defies its own gravity.

From The Washington D.C. Times, August 11, 1989:

MUSIC / Margaret Rankin

Indigo Girls lighten up to grab 9:30 clubgoers

“All right! This is *our* kind of club!” cried Emily Saliers when Indigo Girls took the stage at the 9:30 Club on Wednesday night. But it sure wasn't the 9:30 Club the locals are used to. The customarily hard-core club assumed a gentle, nearly smokeless veneer to complement the Georgia duo's Washington engagement.

The lobby, usually littered with sweating victims of slam-dancing, held only a card table decorated with Greenpeace posters and buttons. Devils Wielding Scimitars played to the sparse beginnings of a

soldout crowd. Most opted to skip the punkish fare of this opening band in favor of milling outside the club.

When the Devils quit, the crowd ambled in. Gone was the usual array of bottle-slinging, tattooed, nose-ringed and otherwise physically altered club-goers. In their places stood a docile, khaki and plaid-clad group, quietly sipping on ice-water and beers from the glass. The bartenders, usually hustling to empty ashtrays and keep up with orders for mixed drinks, sat down to enjoy the show.

And an enjoyable show it was.

The crowd stood silent, intent on the perfect harmonies created as Miss Saliers, 26, and her partner Amy Ray, 25, launched into “Closer to Fine,” a ballad featuring upbeat lyrics like “The best thing you've ever done for me is to help me take my life less seriously, it's only life after all.” The end of the song segued into the most chill-inspiring a cappella opening of “Secure Yourself,” which proclaimed “Now we all are chosen ones,” and the audience became theirs.

Later, the crowd swayed to Southern-style acoustic jams highlighted by the soulful harmonica of

Emory University classmate Sandy Garfinkel, who joined the Girls for this leg of the tour.

Since this year's release of their first major-label album “Indigo Girls,” the duo has received press pegging them as “dark” and “depressing.” During performance, however, their ballads grab the listener's attention more for their harmonic complexity and vocal clarity than for the sometimes-shaky biblical allusions they contain. Phrases borrowed from the Bible seem to have been chosen more for tonal beauty and symmetry than for the message they convey.

Indigo Girls' Offerings Modernized

By [Name]

Staff Writer

If you have ever been to a bar, at least once you have heard jangling acoustic guitars off in the corner and two voices singing worn out Taylor tunes. "Spare me," you say. And you were right. But the guitars and the guitars weren't the Indigo Girls.

They showed up to play for a sold-out house at the Flood Zone on Thursday night and slayed 'em. The music is pure bar music and simple — phase-shifted acoustic guitars and vocals. No drum machine. No synthesizers. No junk. Just music adorned. The Indigo Girls just happen to take the style up a notch or two.

Unmistakably, they would still be comfortable in that bar setting. The difference is that you wouldn't constantly hit on that bunk next to you; you'd listen.

Let's get the obligatory references to the resurgence of folk music out of the way — how Tracy Chapman and Melissa Etheridge, et al., paved the way for anachronistic girl folk music. Bunk. Amy Ray's and Emily Saliers' music need not be so labeled. If they were backed by a sax and a keyboard, it might be called jazz. It doesn't matter.

Miss Ray's voice is husky and deep

and her songs are doleful and brooding. Miss Saliers' voice is brighter with a soaring quality, as are her songs. The two do a vocal counterpoint that occasionally merges to harmony but most often is a double lead vocal, sometimes with utterly different melodies and tempos. Nice. Miss Ray bangs on her guitar. Miss Saliers does that, too, but also picks the stylish, if not technically brilliant, solos.

The girls were very approachable, answering constant questions from the crowd and teasing the few who would like to have had a beer.

And they were very comfortable in the spartan hall, which in no way resembles the bars they sang about.

And they were tricky — opening their set with Miss Saliers' "Closer to Fine," the duo's only hit (so far). The

tune, which would typically have been reserved for an encore, is wonderfully lyrical, a catchy pop number, but like most of the girls' music it is laden with "meaning." The "I, me, me, mine" introspectiveness is forgivable, though, because it sounds so good.

Miss Ray's "Kid Fears" has a brooding quality, sounding remarkably like early Jefferson Airplane. But Athens, Ga., bleeds through both songs; R.E.M.'s influence is apparent. Indeed, Michael Stipes sings on the album version of "Kid Fears," a part handled quite well by the audience at the Flood Zone.

They performed about 15 more songs and were received enthusiastically by the well-scrubbed crowd. Deservedly so. The Indigo Girls are refreshing.

LEAST
ACOUSTIC
ONE OR
JAMES
SAID
VOICES

From Variety, August 16, 1989:

Indigo Girls (2)

TOWN HALL, N.Y.

■ The two trailer park-pretty females who make up the Indigo Girls, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, provided a light and moving all-acoustic display of their songwriting talents which added up to an enjoyable evening of music.

The Girls, now on a headlining tour after spending time earlier this year opening for Neil Young, chose to lead off the sold-out show with a tight performance of "Closer To Fine." The song, which has garnered the most attention for these folksy '70s throwbacks, is a classic searching-for-answers-to-the-question song and a good example of the duo's output.

While the two are different in looks and writing styles, they are similar in vision. Both make references to some "higher mind" in their lyrics, but never make it clear what they're looking for. Trying to decipher their lines is another project. Saliers' lyrics are melodramatic and flowing while Ray's tend to be more immediate and concentrated.

The Girls displayed quality guitar playing and tremendous harmonies; however, at times they seemed unsure of what to do next, even admitting to not planning the show enders. Even so, the au-

dience responded in all the appropriate spots.

During the 90-minute show the Girls sang all but one of the songs off their self-titled Epic album, such as "Kid Fears," "Prince Of Darkness" and "Secure Yourself." The exception was "Tried To Be True," which they said they didn't know well enough to perform live. Their stage presentation varied little from the album renditions, except for slightly longer guitar breaks.

In addition, the Girls pulled out a couple of numbers from independent albums they produced before landing a record deal. For closers they chose Bob Dylan's "All Along The Watchtower" and Paul Simon's "American Tune," adding new verses to the former and doing the latter a cappella. —*Skid*.

From Classic City Live, August 30, 1989:

INDIGO GIRLS

Success hasn't spoiled them yet.

By Betsy Shearron

If it had involved any other group it might have seemed almost prophetic. Midway through a phone interview discussing the Indigo Girls' rapid rise to the upper echelons of pop music and an upcoming two-night stand at Athens' Uptown Lounge, a tree, perhaps weakened by recent storms, falls on the roof of Emily Saliers' Atlanta home. A sign perhaps? The parallels seem too good to ignore — strong local group (or tree) gets caught up in the frenzy of major label record contracts, national tours and publicity (or a summer thunderstorm), its roots weaken and the group (or tree) falls. But while analogies, imagery and other literary devices often play a major role in Indigo Girls songs, the analogy here is, for lack of an appropriate literary term, pure hogwash. Despite an "overnight success" story that's usually only seen in the movies, the Indigo Girls still seem to have their collective feet firmly on the ground even as their career reaches astronomical heights.

Not that the Girls' recent history wouldn't shake anyone up just a bit. In the past six months Saliers and partner Amy Ray have released their major label debut (#26 and climbing on the *Billboard* charts at last check), toured as opening act for both R.E.M. and Neil Young, headlined their own sold-out club tour, chatted with Letterman in the late night, Bryant Gumble in the early morning and picked up a gold record. And that's just hitting the high points. Still, as Saliers settles in for a phone interview, it seems remarkably like old times. Granted, these days interviews are scheduled through Epic Records' New York offices, but the mood is the same as it was six months ago when reporters could simply pick up the phone and call Amy or Emily at will — relaxed, friendly and decidedly down to earth. No, success hasn't spoiled the Indigo Girls yet.



"I really don't feel like that much has changed," Saliers says when asked about the impact of the duo's sudden success. "The only repercussions I've felt is that we're a lot busier now. I haven't stopped to think about. If I did, I think it would be real overwhelming."

Saliers and Ray haven't had time to think about much of anything besides performing and traveling in recent days. And the Girls' schedule shows no signs of letting up. The duo will perform August 30-31 at the Uptown Lounge, during which time a live video for the duo's next single "Land of Canaan" will be shot. In addition, the entire Thursday night performance will be filmed for a future full-length home video planned for next year. And if that's not a vote of confidence from Epic Records, consider

this — the only other Epic artist who can boast of having a full-length home video product is Michael Jackson.

According to Saliers Athens was chosen as the sight of the new video simply because "It felt right. We love Athens, and it was time to make another video, so it worked out. We wanted to do a live video for 'Land Of Canaan' because we play it differently live than we do on the album. We want it to be just like we are onstage — if we break a string, that's the way it goes."

After Athens, Indigo Girls will head for the West Coast and an appearance on the "Pat Sajak Show" September 5 (seen locally on Channel 34 weeknights at 11:30) and a short tour out west before heading for Europe and a tour there. As far as future recording projects go, Epic

plans to re-release the duo's 1987 independent album, *Strange Fire* next month.

"It'll kind of bridge the gap between *Indigo Girls* and the next album," Saliers explains. "It will probably be several months before we start a new album."

Part of the reason for that is, Saliers says, is the duo's heaving touring schedule. "I find it very hard to write on the road," she admits. "Amy's written some good things while we've been on tour, but I think I'm going to have to wait until we get some time off."

The duo just completed a short, much deserved vacation earlier this week, during which, Saliers admits almost apologetically, "I didn't even think about *Indigo Girls*. I just tried to recharge my batteries and have some 'normal' time."

Still, when pressed, Saliers admits that she has allowed herself a few brief moments of reflection on the events of the past six months, and she's as surprised as anyone over what has transpired.

"I don't think we really had any expectations at all for the album," she says. "We went into the studio, did the album the way we wanted and decided to take it a day at a time and see what happened. I don't think either of us expected it to do as well as it has. It's unbelievable really."

There have been a few potholes in the road to success, however. Not everyone has taken to the group's soaring harmonies, intricate acoustic guitar work and emotionally charged lyrics, as a scathing review of the group in the *New York Times* made painfully clear.

"Yeah, that hurt our feelings," Saliers admits when the subject of the review comes up. "He was saying our songs are pretentious, which we try really hard to make sure they're not. Our songs are so personal to us that, when he attacked them, basically he was getting to the heart of what we stood for. So, yeah, it bothered me. I bitched about it for a day and then tried to put it in perspective. It's just one guy's opinion," she adds with a slight laugh. "Unfortunately, he happens to write for *The New York Times*."

But for every negative review in a newspaper or magazine, Saliers and Ray receive dozens of positive letters from fans.

"We've gotten a lot of really nice, personal letters from people saying they've enjoyed our music," Saliers reports. "And that's nice. It's nice to know that people are relating to and getting something out of what we're doing. That's the most important thing."

From The North Carolina Music Monitor, September 1989:

The Indigo Girls

At Cat's Cradle

The Indigo Girls demonstrate the importance of chemistry in musical partnerships. Amy Ray's powerful, gravelly harmony vocals provide a perfect counter balance to Emily Saliers' slightly more conventional melodic voice. The two play guitar with equal skill and, although they apparently write their songs individually, not collaboratively, their songs form a cohesive body of work. Their club-honed chemistry delighted a Friday night crowd on August 11 at the new, improved Cat's Cradle in Chapel Hill, the last of many sold-out shows on this particular leg of their current tour. It's apparently the last show in a small club for awhile, thanks to the gold status of their self-titled major label debut.

"Are you depressed yet?" the girls asked half-seriously of their audience midway through the set of acoustic, introspective songs about love and life. "We'll have to try harder. We're gonna do an angry song now. Anger is one of the stages of depression. The last of which is happiness. We'll get you there too." This reference to the lyrical content of their songs--personal songs of spiritual conflict, rich with religious and bohemian imagery, sometimes emotional, sometimes just reflective--was a way of acknowledging the discrepancy between the songs' topics and the uplift everyone was getting connecting with the music--and with musicians who were obviously enjoying themselves.

A ceramic or plastic black panther sat in the middle rear of the stage, casting an approving eye on the proceedings as the Girls performed all but two songs from their new Epic album plus a good helping of stuff from their *Strange Fire* album and EP, both of which were released on their own independent Indigo label. The embellishments provided by members of R.E.M. and Hot-house Flowers on the new album were not missed: producer Scott Litt did justice to their live sound. Amy whistled through her lips to provide the tin whistle solo on "Closer to Fine," the show's opening song, and guest musician, "Indigo Girls poster boy (their label, not mine)," Sandy Garfinkel fleshed out the bluesier moments on some songs with some fine harmonica adds.

While many comparisons have been made with Suzanne Vega, Tracy Chapman, Michelle Shocked and other acoustic guitar-equipped women, the show reminded me more of Graham Parker's recent acoustic solo tour and live album--rock and roll stripped down to its most portable. They brandished their voices as if they were working with electric guitars and drums.

And, in the midst of the enjoyment, the message was getting through. Everyone seemed to be listening intently to the less familiar material, and I was taken aback when most of the audience sang along with Ray's "Blood and Fire," the emotional highlight of the night, more than with the familiar "Closer to Fine." Either that or they were just singing louder, inspired and spurred on by Amy's passionate vocals. She bettered the version on the album, if that's possible. Emily did the same with "Prince of Darkness," and, as she sang the lines "Someone's on the bathroom floor doing her cocaine" and "No one can convince me we aren't gluttons for our doom," I noticed the large quantities of empty beer cans on the floor. Their first cover of the evening, "Summertime," from *Porgy and Bess*, showcased their vocal talents. For the encores, the duo did a Caroline Aiken anti-Reagan tune, "White House Blues," and the only new song introduced that night, "Welcome Me." Then they brought out their opening act, The Shams, a trio from New York City, for backup vocals on a singalong version of the Youngbloods' "Get Together," and, as a finale, Dylan's "Knockin' on Heaven's Door."

Coming out to sign autographs, Amy Ray expressed how happy she was to see kudzu again after being so long up north on tour. Like kudzu (if you'll excuse the goofy analogy) the Indigo Girls are crawling up the charts and all around the airwaves. Continued exposure won't cause problems as far as professional live performance is concerned. Despite the '60s closing and surface folk appeal in an age of digital sampling, I found nothing anachronistic about the Girls and their unique shade of blue. Many thanks to Frank Heath at the Cradle and, oh no, Emily, I need my pen back! **WV**

From an Epic press release, September 18, 1989:



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE!

September 18, 1989

INDIGO GIRLS STRIKE GOLD

New Single And All-Live Video, "Land Of Canaan,"

Boosts Acclaimed LP And New Tour Dates

The self-titled debut album by Epic recording artists INDIGO GIRLS has been certified Gold for U.S. sales of more than 500,000 copies, and the Decatur, GA-based duo of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have just released "LAND OF CANAAN" as their new cassette single and video.

The new single includes a non-LP B-side: an Indigo Girls original entitled "Never Stop," taken from their 1986 EP issued on the homespun Indigo label. The "Land Of Canaan" video was filmed and recorded completely live during a special Indigo Girls performance at the Uptown Lounge in Athens, GA. The clip was directed by Tamra Davis, whose credits include the Indigo Girls' widely aired "Closer To Fine" video.

Indigo Girls began a new round of headlining concert dates on September 13 in Augusta, GA. Their current tour extends through mid-October, covering the Southeast and Southwest. In The Boston Globe, Jim Sullivan wrote: "Unaffected by hoopla, INDIGO GIRLS are committed to communication, able to travel dark alleys in song, and emerge with an uplifting spiritual message."

INDIGO GIRLS have gone Gold on Epic Cassettes, Compact Discs and Records.

INDIGO GIRLS HEADLINE TOUR

September	13	Augusta, GA	New Post Office
	14	Savannah, GA	Civic Center
	15	Gainesville, FL	University of Florida
	16	West Palm Beach, FL	Carefree Theater
	17	Miami, FL	Club Nu
	19	Orlando, FL	Beacham Theater
	20	Melbourne, FL	Airport Hilton
	22	Tampa, FL	Tampa Theater
	23	Jacksonville, FL	Florida Theater
	24	Tallahassee, FL	Musical Moon
October	2	New Orleans, LA	Tipitinas
	3	Houston, TX	Clubland at Tower Theater
	5	Austin, TX	Texas Union Ballroom
	6	Dallas, TX	Arcadia Theater
	7	College Station, TX	Texas A&M
	9	Memphis, TN	Omni-Daisy
	10	Oxford, MS	The Grove
	11	Nashville, TN	Vanderbilt University
	12	Birmingham, AL	UAB Arena
	13	Macon, GA	Victorian Village

From Rolling Stone, September 21, 1989:

Indigo Girls: Two for the Road

The Atlanta duo chalks up one for the folkies with its major-label debut

YOU CALL THIS WARM?" Amy Ray, one half of the Indigo Girls, is wading tentatively in Lake Michigan, near Chicago, one late-July Sunday, striped pants rolled to her knees. She is trying not to grimace as seventy-degree wavelets lap her calves. "Guess I'm just used to the Gulf," she says, shivering, and scurries back to join fellow Indigo Emily Saliers on a pair of nearby towels.

The acoustic duo from Atlanta is spending this day off on a bite-size private beach on the city's Far North Side, taking in the afternoon sunshine and watching the leisurely progress of sails on the water. The night before, the Indigo Girls performed at the showcase club Cabaret Metro to a sellout audience that seemed to consist largely of transplanted Georgians.

SRO crowds have become commonplace for the Indigo Girls, whose seven-month road stint included three weeks opening for their fellow Peach Staters in R.E.M. The Indigo Girls' Epic Records debut — a collection of vibrant, heart-on-sleeve acoustic pop songs, sparked by the interplay of Ray's weather-beaten alto and Saliers's dusky soprano — has sold over 500,000 copies and cracked the Top Forty. That is an impressive commercial showing for a disc whose primary radio exposure has until recently been at the college-alternative level; its first single, the high-spirited "Closer to Fine," is now heading up the charts.

All of which leaves the Indigo Girls a bit breathless. "We're still adjusting to the fact that we're signed," says the strawberry-haired Saliers, 26, with a laugh.

The pair hails from Decatur, Georgia, which the athletic-looking Ray, 25, describes as a laid-back middle-class suburb of Atlanta (both now reside in the city). They met when Saliers, recently transplanted from her native New Haven, Connecticut, was in sixth grade and Ray in fifth.

The two women, both aspiring singer-guitarists even as grade-school kids ("We were a little bit competitive," says Ray), began performing together in 1980 as Saliers and Ray. The teenage girls played amateur nights at an Atlanta bar — which was okay "as long as we didn't drink," ac-

ording to Ray — covering standard folk-pop fare while gradually working in their more unconventional originals. When both ended up at Atlanta's Emory University three years later, they renamed themselves the Indigo Girls.

As graduation neared, it was clear that Ray was the more dedicated of the two. "I was waffling between going on to grad school or committing to the Indigo Girls," says Saliers.

Ray, by comparison, was obsessed with making music her life. "I played five nights a week," Ray says. "I didn't care what happened. I just wanted to play my music. Emily wasn't as into it as I was, but I told her, 'I'll work everything out if you'll just play with me,' because Emily and I had something special."

Ray finally handed Saliers an ultimatum, and Saliers chose the group. "From then on, we were making career decisions," says Saliers. "Amy always knew the next step to take, so as not to stagnate. She was the one who decided that we needed to play rock & roll clubs instead of folk clubs."

"We were getting pigeonholed as stereotypical pop-folk singers, and I didn't feel that's what we were," Ray adds. "Besides, the rock clubs were the only places you could play original music."

While establishing themselves on Atlanta's rock scene, the Indigo Girls went the home-grown-record route: They issued a single, "Crazy Game," in 1985, an EP in 1986 and an LP, *Strange Fire*, in 1987, all on their Indigo label. (Epic will re-release a slightly altered *Strange Fire* in October and also plans to reissue the EP.)

With some reluctance, the pair signed with Epic in June 1988. "We'd taken this very serious independent stance, and we'd wanted to do it all on our own," says Ray. "It was working; we were making a living. But we had so much to do, we were just falling apart."

After inking the big-league contract, Ray was depressed. "I had always felt this is *our* music, and I didn't want anybody to mess it up," she says. "But Epic made us feel that they wouldn't."

By the following November, the Indigo Girls were in Los Angeles, cutting their album with producer Scott Litt, whose credits include R.E.M. Saliers and Ray had planned at the outset to use backing musicians on the project; as Saliers says, "*Strange Fire* was very acoustic, bare-bones." For the *Indigo Girls* sessions, says Saliers, "we'd describe a certain sound that we wanted, and Scott would know which player to pick."

Litt elicited subtly shaded contributions from Utopia bassist Kasim Sulton, Patti Smith Group drummer Jay Dee Daugherty and percussionist Paulinho Da Costa, among others. The members of R.E.M. were already acquaintances, as were Hothouse Flowers, who added their Irish touches to the ethereal "Secure Yourself" and the hearty "Closer to Fine."

"It's a positive song," says Saliers of the single, whose catchy chorus, "I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains, I looked to the children, I drank from the fountain," suggests that you can find a balance, that one source alone can't always make you feel better.

"I have this obsession with the idea of absolutes," Saliers says, "because there aren't very many in the world anymore. And when your personality's like that, you can kind of have blinders on."

"Closer to Fine" is one of the sunnier moments on *Indigo Girls*, which though roundly praised has been taken to task by many critics for its dark hues. "It's possible that in the future we'll write more songs with comic relief," says Saliers, "but we've just been writing what we felt."

After their tour concluded in August, the Indigo Girls planned to take time off in Atlanta before hitting the road again. "When we go home, we don't hang out together," Saliers says. "I like to have picnics, drink beer, go bowling, be outside. If we saw each other at a bar, we'd say hi, but we wouldn't sit at the same table." 🎵

From Between The Lines, September 28, 1989:

Indigo Girls

by Paul Bellemare

Athens Georgia is a name which has become almost synonymous with quality music. Many good young bands - R.E.M. being the most well known - have hailed from that town and now its time for another. Introducing *Indigo Girls*. Without much hoopla, this band



has produced a stunning first album.

The *Indigo Girls* are Amy Ray and Emily Saliers. These two women are, if this first album is any indication, a gold mine of talent.

Beginning with the lyrical content of this album we find the songs to be complete expressions - usually of uncertainty or emotional trial.

It is uplifting to the listener to be confronted with an album full of songs that make beautiful sense and reflect the painful images of so many aspects of our lives.

Tracey Chapman and Suzanne Vega were acclaimed as the instigators of a modern revival of the folk music style. The *Indigo Girls* have built on this with a definite "blues" refinement. Their cohesive, poetic lyrics are beautifully mixed with a rhythmic, low, basic sound which hearkens as much to blues as folk. This mixture of modern folk with an edge of blues creates for the *Indigo Girls* a distinctive sound which is haunting and addictive.

All of the songs on this album are good, but particular attention should be paid to the songs "Closer to Fine", "Blood and Fire" and "Kid Fears". "Closer to Fine" is a semi-ballad describing the trials all of us go through at one time or another trying to be something we can feel "good" about. "Kid Fears" is noteworthy as Michael Stipe of R.E.M. sings backup vocals. Not only fans of R.E.M. will be impressed with this performance - the contrast with Stipe's voice in the chorus results in one of the most appealing musical phrases on the album.

In the tradition of the musicians of Athens Ga. the *Indigo Girls* have come up with a very good first album. It's not overproduced, as so many are today, and this allows the talent to shine through. With a debut as cohesive and powerful as this one, everyone should already be eagerly anticipating their follow-up effort.

From Seventeen, October 1989:

JUST FOLKS

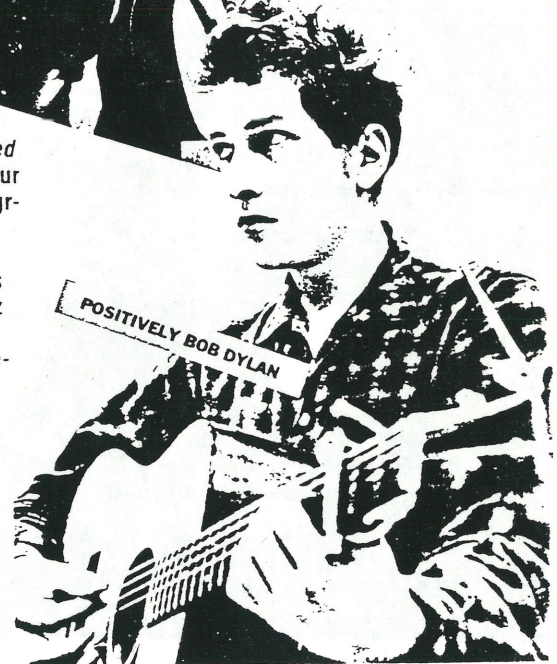
Been hearing lots of acoustic guitars and political lyrics lately? That'd be folk music. It's back; it never should've left. 1. *This Land Is Your Land* (Folkways). You'll have to search used-record bins for this Woody Guthrie LP, but do it—this is the man who started it all. 2. *Bob Dylan's Greatest Hits, Volumes 1 and 2* (Columbia). The guy is a poet. The lyrics of *The Times They Are a-Changin'* became the anthem for the '60s. 3. *Sweet Baby James* (Warner Bros.). James Taylor's guitar playing is as moving as his lyrics. Really sweet. 4. *Indigo Girls* (Epic). Truly folk for the '90s—Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have heart and guts. See 'em in concert—they're captivating.

VIDIOT'S DELIGHT

1. *Working Girl*. Melanie Griffith didn't win the Oscar, but she won our hearts. Joan Cusack is brilliant as her cosmetic-queen pal. 2. *Who Framed Roger Rabbit*. This charming tour de force in toon technology is gr-r-eat! It even works on the tube. 3. *Lost Angels*. Nobody went to see this gem—which is a shame, 'cause Adam Horovitz is so good. 4. *Major League*. Charlie Sheen shines as a baseball punk in this funny view of the diamond life. It's also the perfect warm-up for the *World Series*, ABC-TV, 10/14. 5. *Slaves of New York*. A look w-a-a-a-y back at the 1984 trendy art scene. Not great, but the hats are fun and the soundtrack rocks.



VERY COOL INDIGO GIRLS ARE RED-HOT



From Music, October 1989:

In the Mainstream



Amy Ray ▼



Emily Saliers ▼

Indigo Girls

Almost Blue

The stage lights dim to a soft blue glow, as two unaccompanied voices softly sing, "Secure yourself to heaven/Hold on tight, the night has come/Fasten up your earthly burdens/You have just begun." Just begun, indeed! Scarcely a

year ago, the Georgia-bred Indigo Girls—26-year old Emily Saliers and 25-year old Amy Ray—were quite content harmonizing for small crowds in nightspots like Atlanta's Little Five Points Pub. Championed by fellow alternative rockers such as

R.E.M. and Hothouse Flowers, the Girls release their self-titled Epic Records debut album early this spring. After several months of steady touring, both as openers for R.E.M., and headlining their own club dates, *Indigo Girls* has gone gold, and enjoyed a long ride in the Top 30.

The Girls have been compared to everyone from early Jefferson Airplane to British folksters Fairport Convention, but "folk-rock for the 90s" seems to be the handle with which Ray and Saliers are most comfortable. For the most part, critics have been kind to the Girls' major label debut, although Amy says, "We've been kicked in the pants by some big critics, which can really effect you mentally, when what you're doing is really sincere. I mean, what has the world come to when you're trying to

sing about things that mean a great deal to you and people call you 'pretentious?'"

Saliers' dad is a Methodist minister and professor of theology, and she and Ray were both raised in the Methodist church. Ray was also a religion major at Emory University in Atlanta. Expressions of their Christian faith are to be found in many of the tunes on *Indigo Girls*. "Surprisingly," says Amy, "it's the one thing that critics have not picked on us about."

Emily adds, "it's something we never really thought much about until people started mentioning it, then we got almost self-conscious about it." Saliers adds that she and Ray see their Christianity adding another dimension to their music, rather than becoming the focal point of their songs. "It seems there's no escaping those images,

but there's definitely a difference between what we're doing and what a contemporary Christian musician would do, which is be careful to mention Jesus Christ specifically. Then anyone who's not a Christian is immediately shut-off from getting anything out of that song."

Amy emphasizes the deep commitment the pair feel by recalling her years spent at Methodist church camp. "There you are, sitting by a lake, by a fire, in that safe womb-like environment. All of a sudden, before you know it, you're 25-years old, and still thinking about what those spirituals mean to you."

On stage, the girls pepper their set with self-deprecating humor and vibrant guitar playing, tossing on reminiscences about the grade school days when they first met, and the times spent

scuffling—not so long ago—on the Georgia club circuit. Although the songs about their personal relationships, such as "Love's Recovery" and "Tried to Be True" are well received, it is often the more spiritual numbers, like "Prince of Darkness" and "Strange Fire" that draw the biggest ovations.

Ray and Saliers say that they hope to maintain the personal connection with their audience that finds them with what Amy calls "the longest guest lists in the business." Emily adds, "so far, we're able to keep answering our own mail. And the letters that mean the most to us are the ones where people tell us that the songs have helped bring about change in their lives. It's wonderful when that happens."

—Bruce A. Brown

Too many words

By Caryl Herfort

The phone rings, and on the other end of the line is supposed to be the voice of Amy Ray, one of the two singer/songwriter/guitarists who comprise Indigo Girls (members of the press have already collectively pegged Ray as the tough, mouthy one and the band's sound "folk rock"). Instead, as Ray has made a last-minute run to the guitar store, her best friend and business partner—and other Girl—Emily Saliers (for future reference, the reddish-blond, folkier half of the duo) is handling this particular PR function.

"I can only give you 15 minutes," says Saliers, sounding more sincerely sorry than impatient. "I have to call someone else later." Indigo Girls' debut album for Epic Records (*Indigo Girls*) was released earlier this year. It was taken in quite warmly by the college-radio circuit and, though not heavy-rotation slick, has made an appearance on the commercial waves, the ones where it's getting increasingly difficult to tell the best spots from the actual songs. The album hit the stores in March. Saliers and Ray have been on tour ever since.

"Saliers and Ray" is the name Emily and Amy adopted for themselves when they first began performing together during high school in Decatur, Georgia. It's a name they just as well abandoned, sounding as it does as if it should belong instead to a husband-and-wife vaudeville team—you know, Saliers and Ray, she juggles, he tells jokes. But this is different. This is serious.

"There're a lot of things to think about in life," Saliers is saying, explaining away the main criticism that has been made towards the album, even by those reviewers who otherwise gave it multi-star notices: Indigo Girls really rock, they go, but the stuff they sing about can be a real downer. "Dark and moralistic" said one writer.

"Too serious," or "too self-serious," said more than one. "Some pop music doesn't mean anything at all," says Saliers, with an audible shrug. "We have been told some people find [the album] very uplifting."

"Too serious," one suspects (being a rather ridiculous criticism), might in some cases have been used as a kinder alternative for "overwrought" or even "heavy-handed" for *Indigo Girls*, the recording, and Saliers and Ray

Emily Saliers: 'Some pop music doesn't mean anything at all.'

.....
themselves wear their emotion squarely on the sleeve. It might be more correct to call them earnest (some would say deadly earnest), something like The Smiths' Morrissey.

While slightly cynical about the moral worth of humankind in general, they appear to harbor little cynicism for the form they have chosen to express themselves in, a factor that makes them very (sorry) unpostmodern and maybe a little goofy, something like John Denver. In any case, from first groove to last, *Indigo Girls* stands as a study in the sincere desire to create wise and meaningful pop songs.

The effort translates into rather simply constructed tunes—similar, Saliers says, to songs appearing on Indigo Girls' two early, pre-Epic, self-produced releases, an EP and LP—with lyrics dealing with some pretty basic subject matter (you know, love, love lost, the search for higher truth, etc.). The phrase "darkly moralistic" is no doubt a reference to the pair's, especially Saliers', penchant for using Christian imagery in nearly every song (you know, angels and devils,



Saliers and Ray, a.k.a. Indigo Girls: Their biggest hindrance to hipness might just be higher education.

heaven and hell, the Promised Land)—generally a taboo in this paganistic genre. Her father is a minister, but she mostly shrugs off any profound significance for this, too.

As pop stars, Saliers and Ray's biggest hindrance to hipness might just be higher education (both attended Atlanta's Emory University). "They called me 'verbose,'" Saliers says of a *New York Times* review of an Indigo Girls gig

that came down decidedly on the negative side—their worst notice so far, she says.

The lyrics on the album, especially Saliers', do tend to be a bit wrierly, and the line is fine between verbosity and a pop album that features a song with the word "prostrate" in it (as in "Closer to Fine," the upbeat, rollicking first single from *Indigo Girls*). Or there's this line from Saliers' "Love's Recovery": "Feeding the cancer of my intellect the blood of love soon neglected/Lay dying in the strength of its impurity." Though awkward at times, this wordiness is a mild bog that can't cripple the sheer power of the music. That same line sung in Saliers' husky soprano is unbelievably beautiful.

The real drive of *Indigo Girls*, which was produced by Scott Litt, producer of R.E.M.'s last two albums, is the interplay of the sometimes belted, sometimes gravely, sometimes hushed, always beautiful harmonies of Saliers and Ray. Awash in warm acoustic guitars, their wandering voices trace circles around each other, creating an energy that no amount of book-learnin' could teach or ruin. It's a terrific album that also features musical support by R.E.M. and its lead singer, Michael ("Rent-A") Stipe, and Ireland's Hothouse Flowers.

Though both Girls come across as media-savvy and self-assured in interviews—translated: ambitious—Saliers says the signing with Epic came, for the most part, as a fluke ("There was no bidding war for us"). The nurturing and encouragement of living in Georgia, where new acts emerge from the fertile soup of R.E.M. fallout nearly by the hour, was certainly a factor (Saliers recommends The Ellen James Society and The Swimming Pool Q's, two of their Georgia-bred musical peers). And while it's probably true, though predictable to observe, Saliers offers one explanation for the reason Indigo Girls got a career bite without really looking for it: pure timing. "The record company started signing a slew of women playing guitars."

Girls with guitars are mighty marketable these days. And as Epic goes about, as any good record company would, trying to market Indigo Girls to their fullest potential (the band performs a song on the soundtrack for an upcoming episode

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