

lifeblood

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"SWAMP OPHELIA" DUE IN LATE APRIL

"Swamp Ophelia", the new album from the Indigo Girls, is now scheduled to be released in late April. Recording was completed in Nashville in mid-January, and mixing is scheduled to start soon in Atlanta. U.S. tour dates are still not known, but Amy and Emily are scheduled to tour Australia in April. Russell Carter mailed out a postcard in mid-January confirming the album's title and release date, and also announcing the release of the "Philadelphia" soundtrack. Emily and Amy's song, a cover of "I Don't Wanna Talk About It", appears early in the movie, playing on a kitchen radio while Tom Hanks' character is talking on the phone with his mother. It has also reportedly been released as a promo CD single. A video has been released for Bruce Springsteen's "Streets Of Philadelphia", it is not yet known if one will be released for "I Don't Wanna Talk About It". Amy and Emily performed the song on David Letterman on Wednesday, January 12th, but were not interviewed during the show. If you haven't seen the movie yet you should.

Printed on recycled paper



Taken From The Atlanta Journal Constitution, December 13, 1993.

THE INDIGO GIRLS

Nashville, long hours nurture new album

By Holly Crenshaw
STAFF WRITER

Nashville — The producer's résumé is filled with clients such as Rush, Queensryche, Suicidal Tendencies and Alice Cooper.

The engineer has just come off a big project with Tony Bennett.

And in this unassuming recording studio on the outskirts of Nashville, the drab hallways are lined with gold records by the Oak Ridge Boys, Ronnie Milsap, Barbara Mandrell and Slim Whitman.

But somehow in the middle of this odd culture clash, the folk-rock Indigo Girls swear they've found an ideal environment for recording their fourth Epic release, due around April.

The Atlanta-based duo of Amy Ray and Emily Saliers — who've been holed up here since early November — booked this unlikely country-and-gospel-oriented studio for several reasons: It's furnished with older equipment that offers the warmer sound of analog recording; it's likely to cost half as much as previous sessions in Woodstock, N.Y.; and even though it's an easy drive from Atlanta, it's still far enough away to block out the distractions of hometown daily life.

"In Nashville, Amy and I have got all the things we need," says Saliers. "We've got a gym to work out in. We're pretty close to home, so we can go home on weekends. And also — because it's Music City — if you need a microphone or a guitar or a musician spur of the moment, they're all at your fingertips."

Still untitled, the album-in-progress reunites the Indigos with producer Peter Collins, who helped steer 1992's "Rites of Passage" into richer, more musically complex terrain. That album — which paired eclectic instrumentation with the commercial viability of songs such as "Galileo" — went gold faster than either of their two previous releases.

"They took a big chance using me because I'd come off Queensryche, which is not highly indicative of the kind of music they respond to," says Collins in a soft-spoken British accent. "But under pressure — actually, under protest," he says laughing, "they had a meeting with me and they discovered we talked the same language."

Like "Rites," the new album uses drummer Jerry Marotta and bassist Sara Lee for the rhythmic foundation beneath the duo's acoustic-guitar-driven sound. And at the music's center, the huskier sound of Ray's voice blends with Saliers's purer one as they harmonize and weave counter-melodies through each other's tunes.

Both brought five new songs to this session that — so far — have only been heard at



KAREN CHANCE/Special

Indigo Girls Amy Ray (left) and Emily Saliers work on their new album in a Nashville studio. "In Nashville, Amy and I have got all the things we need," says Saliers.

a few unannounced performances in Atlanta clubs. "This still has a very primitive feel to it," Saliers says. "It's not going to be a slickly produced record or anything like that. I have a feeling that on this record, we're going to be using more things that happen sort of by accident."

Case in point, she says, is Lisa Germano's off-kilter mandolin and pennywhistle work on "Least Complicated," a goofy performance that popped out of thin air and unexpectedly became the song's infectious pop hook.

It's the kind of happenstance that comes easier now that they've established a track record in the studio.

"The [Indigo] Girls are very smart," says Collins. "They know what they want, which I think is great. They have a very clear idea of what they like and what they don't like."

"But at the same time, if they don't like something and I like it, they're prepared to give it a chance."

"And they're good fun. We have a good laugh, which is always important when you're making a record."

They may appreciate fun, but the four-member team held tight to a 10-hour workday when interviewed last week, breaking only for a quick vegetarian dinner and a few jokes before getting back to work. Ray spent most of the day repeating her guitar part on countless Stratocasters and Telecasters, and experimenting with vintage amps while Col-

liers closed his eyes and listened intently to each subtle tonal variation.

"Peter knows when we might be wasting our time, even if Emily and I don't," Ray says. "He knows what he can get out of us now instead of so much trial and error — he knows what we have to reach for."

There's no deadline pressure yet, but they plan to finish up production work in Atlanta by early February.

"That sort of allows for the record company to get the whole machine working behind it for a spring release," Saliers says. "What's important to me and Amy is that we get to be part of the alternative college-radio scene before college breaks up for the summer."

Even with the sessions falling neatly into place, Ray says the recording process isn't something she'd ever want to get too matter-of-fact about.

"As soon as I set foot in the studio, I become much more vulnerable and everything enters into it. Your whole life becomes a real extreme existence of good and bad."

"I feel completely drained when I get finished," Ray says. "And I get to a point where I'm like, 'I don't want to do this anymore — it's just too emotional,'" she adds, laughing.

"But if you really want to do a good job, you have to open yourself up to everything — I think — in order to have the most true performance."

From unknown source:

Described as an "Atlanta version of the Travelling Wilburys," the next release from Daemon Records will be from **New Mongrels**, featuring **Indigo Girls Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, Gerard McHugh, Michelle Malone, Michael Lorant**, and others. The album is penciled in for April release. Meanwhile, Amy and Emily have been in Nashville preparing the next Indigo Girls album... ~~speaking of which,~~ a promo CD-5

recently sent to radio stations by Epic Records that you might want to look for at collector's shops or the next record show collects four live recordings of tracks from *Rites Of Passage*, plus the studio version of that album's "Three Hits."

From unknown source:

INDIGO GIRLS MAKE LETTERMAN — BARELY: Indigo Girls **Amy Ray** and **Emily Saliers** may have looked rested and relaxed when they sang "It's a Miracle" during their sixth visit to the **David Letterman** show this past week, but that wasn't the case. "We were supposed to leave Nashville at 8:40 a.m., but because of the snowstorm in New York, the plane sat on the ground for an hour and then we had to circle over Pennsylvania for an hour — with the pilot telling us all about the terrible weather all the time," Saliers said afterward. "Then we couldn't land at LaGuardia because their landing instruments failed, so we were diverted to Hartford, Conn., where it was 110 miles to New York City and it took us four hours to get there. I'm a nervous wreck traveling in a car anyway, and we were under pressure — the taping starts at 4 p.m., and we got there at a quarter of 6." But all ended well for the Atlanta duo. "As always, they were very nice to us," Saliers said, "and Letterman leaned over after our song and said, 'Sorry about your day's travel.' We've had nothing but good experiences on that show."

Taken from *The Performing Songwriter*, November/December 1993.

MUSIC HALL

SPOTLIGHT

Eddie's Attic

Decatur, Georgia

By Holly Crenshaw

There's nothing outwardly conspicuous about Eddie's Attic, an Atlanta music club whose entrance is tucked down a side street of the quiet suburb of Decatur.

But in the year and a half it's been open,

Eddie's has quickly become the main focal point of Atlanta's burgeoning acoustic music scene, with an emphasis on quality musicianship that makes singer-songwriters gravitate to the popular venue.

"It truly is *the* acoustic listening bar in Atlanta," says Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls. Both she and Amy Ray make the club their main hangout when they're not on the road.

Owner Eddie Owen didn't exactly start from scratch when he opened Eddie's Attic — his first music club — last spring. The lanky, pipe-smoking Owen, who's in his late 30s, spent nine years managing Trakside Tavern, a hole-in-the wall bar literally just across the railroad tracks two blocks away from Eddie's.

Owen, who developed a love of acoustic and a cappella church music during his Georgia childhood, got a degree in physical education and taught school for a while before he decided to go into bartending full time.

Trakside was mainly a college hangout until Owen asked the Indigo Girls to perform for the bar's first live music booking in 1986. "I think they made \$30 or \$40 in sandwiches and beer for those first few shows," he remembers. "There were some nights when they played during the week to 15 or 20 people."

But it didn't take long for those early experiments in live acoustic music to take off. By charging no cover and offering an unparalleled intimacy with its performers, the tiny Trakside was soon overrun with avid music fans who lined up outside its doors to catch not only the Indigo, but other Atlanta singer-songwriters such as Kristen Hall,



Photo by Holly Crenshaw

Caroline Aiken, Gerard McHugh, Michelle Malone, Kodac Harrison, Dede Vogt and the duo of Andrew Hyra and Kristian Bush.

Later, when Owen spotted an empty loft on Decatur's town square, he not only grabbed a space he'd long thought would make an ideal music club site, but he also transported an entire stable of acoustic musicians with him.

Eddie's Attic immediately took on the feel of more upscale respectability — though some Trackside regulars missed that bar's run-down charm. But what Atlanta acoustic music fans gained with the opening of Eddie's was a larger, more comfortable venue with a well-designed listening room and a top-of-the-line P.A. system; a game room where patrons can congregate around its pool tables without having to pay a cover charge; and a covered deck in back with its own separate bar, where customers can freely talk while still observing the night's performance on closed-circuit TV.

Instead of the dark, cramped feeling of most music clubs, Eddie's comes across as more open and sprawling. When customers climb the stairwell and enter the bar, they can detour to the right, where the window-lined game room and open-air deck allow room to spread out. Or for those who've come for the club's main attraction, they can head for the listening room, whose terracotta-colored walls, wooden floors and large arched window give the club a warm atmosphere.

In addition to the Atlanta Braves memorabilia and music posters covering the walls, there's one other important piece of listening room decor: a sign on its front doors urging patrons to be quiet once they enter.

From the beginning, Owen says, he wanted his club to be a serious showcase for acoustic musicians. "I was a musician myself and I always tried to treat everyone like they were somebody," says Owen. "The predominant mood had been to treat musicians like they were just a by-product of beer sales."



The Indigo Girls making an appearance at Eddie's Attic in March

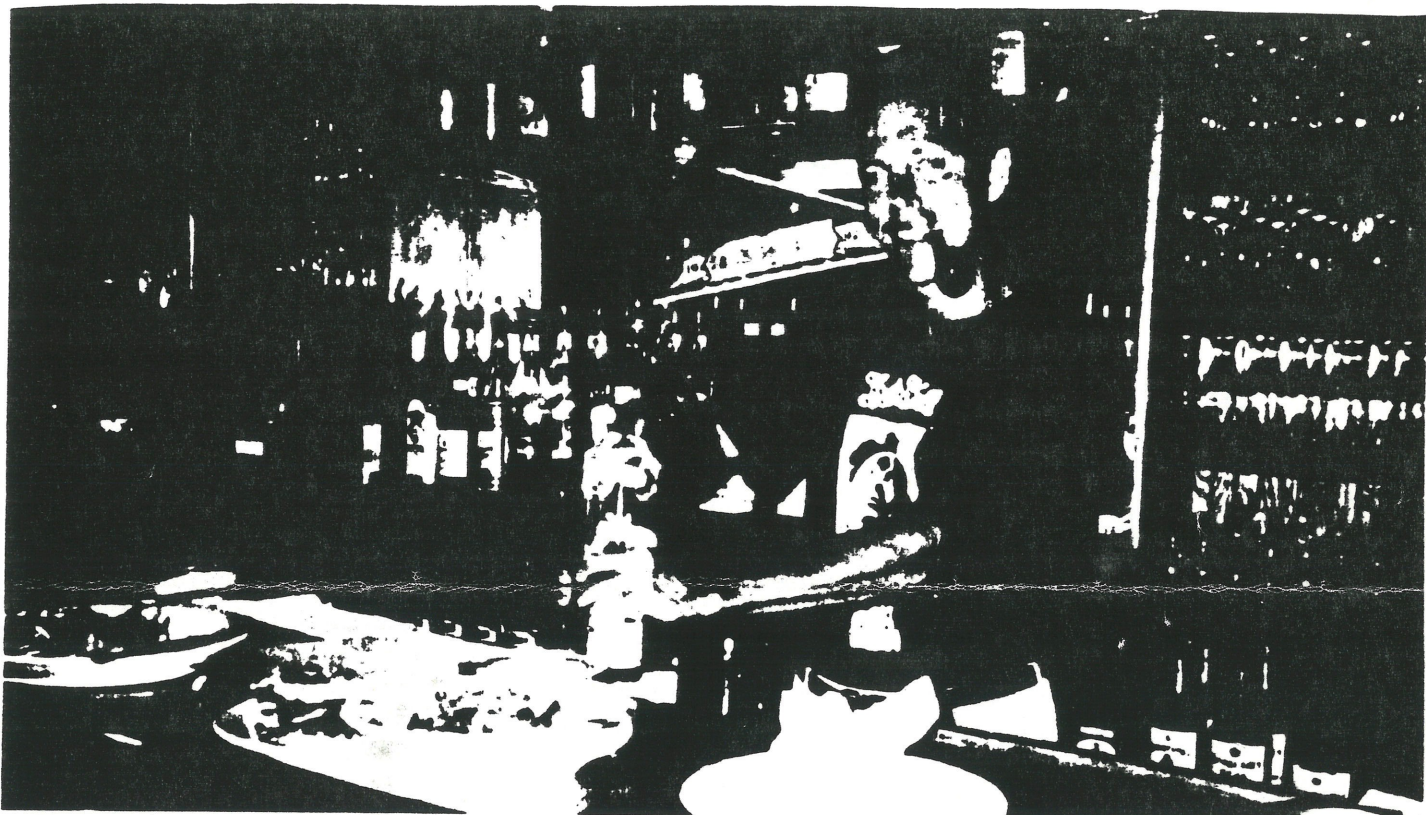
"Eddie has educated the audience here to be a listening audience," says Caroline Aiken. "He was really one of the first to start that in Atlanta, with the help of Amy and Emily, of course."

Even back at the scruffier Trackside, Owen would occasionally shout out to the crowd from behind the bar to quiet down and pay attention to the music. Here, he's a constant presence — stepping onstage to introduce an act, slipping behind the soundboard to adjust the mix, or adding background harmonies to one of the performer's tunes.

After a few already-booked bands play out their last scheduled dates, Owen says he'll stick with a strictly acoustic format. There are plenty of other rock venues around, he says, and since he's already getting tapes from 25 to 30 acts a week seeking a slot to play, he hardly has to worry about a shortage of musicians to book.

"What I look at is the songwriting," he says of his screening process. "I try to imagine that I'm hearing the music live and listen to hear if there's enough emotion in the voice and variety in the guitar playing to see if they'd grab me and make me sit still and listen."

On the club's popular songwriters'



Eddie Owen behind the bar, handing out his own brand of good cheer.

nights, four musicians take turns trying out new material and singing along with each other. Both Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have made appearances at the songwriting forums.

"Some of the harmonies and guitar leads that happen on those nights are magic," Owen says.

He also just held the first of what he hopes will be frequently scheduled open mic nights, where musicians can test the waters with a few songs. On nights when performances aren't booked, he'll let musicians come by and sign up for that day's open mic list - the 10 or 12 acts that put their name down first will be allowed to play two or three songs.

The music hall has also quietly begun hosting performances by nationally known artists like Iris DeMent, James McMurtry, David Wilcox, Syd Straw, Pierce Pettis, Henry Gross and Don Henry. A Joan Baez booking also appears imminent.

"I started scheduling bigger acts as soon as I figured out what the room was capable of," he says. "With Iris DeMent, we did 250 people and it was packed, and when the Indigo Girls play here, we take out all the tables and chairs and get 350 in here."

"What I'd love," he adds, "is for this club to be a stepping stone to bigger venues for acoustic musicians who can't necessarily sell 600 tickets."

Emily Saliers says she's always quick to recommend Eddie's as not only a place for fellow musicians to play, but also as a social stop for anyone visiting Atlanta. "That's the first place I'd send somebody," she says.

"Eddie's to me feels like a home place, where you have a musical community of friends who support each other," Saliers says, "and then Eddie — who's a true lover of music who wants to make it as lucrative as possible for every struggling artist."

The hardest part of his job, Owen says, is having to tell someone their music is not up to the caliber he wants to present, a judgment call that often makes him uncomfortable.

"I'm still very picky about who plays here," he adds. "I hope when an artist says he or she played at Eddie's that it really means something to them to have that on their resume — that they can say that they were treated well and that it was a good room to play and that everybody was happy."



EDDIE'S ATTIC
515B North McDonough St.
Decatur, GA 30030
(404) 377-4976

Taken From The Atlanta Journal Constitution, December 24, 1993.

Flying Biscuit takes off in Candler Park

By Elliott Mackle
DINING CRITIC

Breakfast is hardly Atlanta's most popular habit — except when it's called Sunday brunch. Candler Park is far from the kind of place where a new restaurant's success is almost guaranteed.

Let us now praise the brave backers of **The Flying Biscuit Cafe**. Not only are they determinedly specializing in breakfast in the scruffy-but-fresh-scrubbed Candler Park district, there's not a bagel, Belgian waffle or dessert buffet on the premises.

It may just work. Several kinds of biscuits — regular, whole-wheat and pumpkin, for instance — are offered six days a week. Light as eagle feathers, they're served with homemade preserves or as wrappers for eggs, cheese or turkey sausage.

Oh, that sausage: Sage-spicy, cooked just enough to bring out the flavor, the rounds (\$2.95 for two) are perfectly set off by splashes of the pure maple syrup intended for organic oatmeal pancakes.

Oh, those cakes: Lighter than such healthy-sounding fare usually turns out, they're topped with a compote of fresh pineapple and strawberries (\$5.50; \$3.50 for a short stack of two).

Don't stop there. Whole-wheat French toast with caramelized bananas and honey (\$5.50), Mexican eggs (or tofu) scrambled with cheese and peppers and swaddled in a tortilla (same price), fried eggs on black bean cakes with salsa (\$5.95) — the menu has miles of style.

Humor is another welcome ingredient. The bohemian breakfast — espresso brownie, cup of coffee and two cigarettes — is offered "to go only" in this tobacco-free room (\$2.95 — and they haven't sold one yet). During rush hours, servers pass a ticky-tacky talisman — a bouquet of plastic flowers, water and snowflakes encased in a clear globe — from table to table.

Also worth a smile: the spicy, lightly grilled turkey burger served on toasted whole-wheat bun with crunchy red-pepper mustard, lettuce-and-tomato gar-

The Flying Biscuit Cafe

Opened: Nov. 16.

Location: 1655 McLendon Ave.
(at Clifton Road). 687-8888.

Hours: 9 a.m.-9 p.m.
Tuesdays-Sundays.

Alcohol: No.
Smoking not permitted.

Reservations: Large parties only.

Cards: No.

*Red meat and alcohol are banned
but not cheesecake, chicken,
caffeine or chocolate.*

nish and organic field greens salad (\$5.75). Various pastas, salads and soups are listed on the menu or available as specials from the still-evolving kitchen.

This is stylish, rather than dogmatic, health food. Red meat and alcohol are banned but not (blessed be) cheesecake, chicken, caffeine or chocolate. Shakes are poured — espresso and chocolate chip currently — plus excellent coffees, teas, Coca-Cola products (including caffeine-free diet Coke), orange juice, root beer and — whoops — hot chocolate that tastes right out of the paper bag.

The Flying Biscuit Cafe is woman-owned and operated. Indigo Girl Emily Saliers is an investor. Alix Kenagy, proprietor of Indigo Coastal Grill and Partners Morningside Cafe, is unofficial godmother. Biscuit co-owner Delia Champion waited tables at Indigo for six years and chef April Moon cooked at Partners before quitting to have a baby. The well-finished-but-informal look and laid-back feel of menu, food and room (the icebox is treated as a decorative element) recall the early years of Kenagy's now super-popular watering holes.

There are charming differences. After all, this is Candler Park. Place settings come from Bill's Dish Barn, a remnants-and-seconds outlet in North Georgia. Mix-and-match saucers and plates carry such logos as Christ Cella and The Ritz Cafe. Sugar-pack holders were originally produced for the International House of Pancakes.

IHOP this is emphatically, happily not.

Editor's note: *First Bite* invites you to do what our critic does: Venture out to new restaurants, sample the menus and talk to the staff. Don't hesitate to let the owners know how they're doing. (Hint: It's not rude — they want to get it right.) We'll consider them for review in Saturday's LEISURE when they've been open long enough to rate. The Atlanta Journal-Constitution pays for all food, beverages and gratuities. Free meals are not accepted under any circumstances.

From Entertainment Weekly, January 14, 1994.

MARLEE MACLEOD Drive Too Fast

(Medium Cool/Twin/Tone)

After apprenticeships in the alternative breeding grounds of Athens, Ga., and Minneapolis, singer-songwriter Marlee MacLeod's spunky debut shows she's learned her lessons well. But while her R.E.M./Replacements influences are apparent on tracks like the jangly "Everybody Loves Me," she is more joyful than her forebears. Singing in a barely suppressed chuckle, MacLeod proves that rock works best when reverence is minimal. **B+** —BC

The Pseudo Back Page

A couple of things to pass along from my last visit to Georgia:

If you are interested in getting some high quality photos give Jinny Hawkins a call at Eat More Records (404-607-9122). She has some great shots, including Amy and Emily and their Grammy's taken backstage in January of 1990, and also pictures of other Atlanta and national artists.

Marlee Macleod played acoustic at Writer's Night at Eddie's and electric with her band at The Star Community Bar in Little Five Points. She has just released a CD and I highly recommend you go see her if you get the chance. One of the local papers ran a great article on her while I was there, if I can track down a copy I will run it in the next issue.

With the release of the new album only a couple of months away, I wanted to remind everybody that you are always welcome to contribute articles and/or reviews that you have written or found somewhere else. We were able to provide a wide range of reviews of "Rites Of Passage" and would like to do the same with "Swamp Ophelia".

Guess that's it for this month, I am going to turn the rest of this issue over to the "Looking Back" series.

Take care and be well -

CAROLYN :)

From The Austin American Statesman, October 5, 1989:

Music joined Indigo Girls; honesty powers their appeal

By Peter Blackstock
Special to the American-Statesman

Compatibility in musical taste often provides the foundation for a good professional relationship between musicians. For Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, it also paved the path to friendship.

The two singer/songwriters, known as the Indigo Girls, met in Atlanta when Ray was in fifth grade, but they didn't get to know each other until high school. "We both were playing music, but we didn't really like each other," Ray said. "I guess it was about my junior year, we were both in chorus, and we discovered that we sort of liked each other musically. We jammed together, and then we became really fast friends. Music does that to people."

If music was a force powerful enough to change the way Ray and Saliers reacted to each other personally, it's not too surprising that their own songs infuse personal topics with an emotionally powerful fervor. Their instrumentation follows simple folk principles — both Ray and Saliers play acoustic guitar and sing — but the spirit of rock 'n' roll is pre-

INDIGO GIRLS

Opening act: Gemini
When: 9 tonight
Where: Texas Union Ballroom
Admission: Sold out
Information: 471-9225

sent in almost all their songs and provides a sense of urgency to their music.

That urgency seems to strike a chord in listeners quickly. Rarely have so many people asked this music writer about a band after hearing just one of its songs on the radio. That happened with the Indigo Girls during the past few months. Does Ray have any clues why the duo's music has such an immediate appeal?

"I'm glad it does, but I don't have any reason for it," she said. "We think it's honest music, and that that's a reason why it works," Ray said. "But we don't know why it touches people like we're assuming it does."

The honesty Ray speaks of usually is arrived at through soul-searching lyrics that often find resolution in the acceptance of life's ambiguities. The chorus of the song *Closer to Fine* is a good example: "There's more than these answers to

life's questions pointing me in a crooked line/And the less I seek my source for some definitive, the closer I am to fine."

That song was the first single and video released from the Indigo Girls' major-label debut album, which came out in March. The self-titled LP went gold a few weeks ago and has vaulted Ray and Saliers, both in their mid-20s, into the national spotlight.

As with most "overnight" successes, however, the Indigo Girls' story has been in the making for a few years. After teaming up near the end of their high-school years around 1981, Ray and Saliers temporarily went their separate ways — Ray to Vanderbilt University in Nashville, Tenn., Saliers to Tulane in New Orleans — before both transferred to Emory University back in Atlanta.

They rejoined and began playing regularly at Atlanta nightclubs, fortunate to be based in a city that has flourished with musical activity in much the same way Austin has during the 1980s. In 1985, they released a single on their own label, Indigo Records, and they backed it

See Indigo, C9

Indigo Girls' appeal powered by honesty

Continued from C1

up with a six-song EP in 1986.

A full LP the following year was the next and perhaps the most significant step. The album, *Strange Fire*, sold about 7,500 copies, a good tally considering Ray and Saliers were selling the record on their own with almost no distribution help.

More important, the quality of *Strange Fire* drew serious attention from major labels, and the group signed with Epic in 1988. New versions of two songs from *Strange Fire* were included on the first Epic record, including the new single *Land of Canaan*. In addition, the label recently decided to reissue *Strange Fire*, with a couple of songs deleted and a cover of the 1960s Youngbloods classic *Get Together* added. It's scheduled for release in November.

In retrospect, Ray says, she thinks doing those early records independently was an important experience. "I always tell people to do that," she said. "You learn from it. And it makes your music and the whole process so much more important to you that when you start getting interest from labels, you really pay attention to what's going on because you already kind of know how things work. It keeps you from being sucked up into everything."

In addition to the educational advantages, Ray says, an independent release often serves as a valuable developmental tool.

"I really believe that even if you're not necessarily ready for the studio — let's say you haven't been together that long, or whatever — that the sooner you get into the studio, the faster that you improve, and it just gives you drive. And the sooner you have something like a tape to take with

you places, you can tour and have something to leave with people."

That tactic helped Ray and Saliers gradually build followings outside of their hometown in places such as Austin, where they played for the first time in the fall of 1987 (at the now-defunct Big Mamou nightclub). Only a couple dozen people attended that show, but most of them bought an album and told their friends. When the Indigo Girls returned to Big Mamou in January and April of 1988, the place was packed.

It's not too surprising that the duo developed a strong following in Austin, considering the city's similarities to Ray and Saliers' hometown.

"Austin and Atlanta are really similar musically," Ray said. "They're not quite as competitive, and people tend to play on each others' albums, and hang out together and stuff."

That amiable atmosphere helped give the Indigo Girls a chance to reach wider audiences this spring, when they were asked by hometown pals in R.E.M., who also made a guest appearance on the Indigo Girls' album, to open several shows for them on a U.S. tour.

In addition to the common spirit of camaraderie, the Austin and Atlanta music scenes find themselves facing the same decisions about the extent to which they want music to become a business.

"They're having a seminar here this year, kind of like Austin's (South by Southwest). There's a push for that (more direct industry involvement), but a lot of the people here don't want that to happen, because as soon as that starts happening, people start getting sort of self-involved."

From The Birmingham News, October 6, 1989:

Atlanta duo sings it from heart

By Shawn Ryan
News popular music writer

When R.E.M. embarked on its first headlining tour of the nation's sports arenas it wanted to pick an opening act that would enhance the musical quality of the evening, a group that was serious about its music and what it had to say.

On past, smaller tours, R.E.M. had chosen such up-and-coming groups as 10,000 Maniacs and Camper Van Beethoven. This time R.E.M. picked the Indigo Girls, a two-woman acoustic duo from Atlanta that had just released their major label debut on Epic. The selection partially stemmed from lead singer Michael Stipe's infatuation with the them.

Although they had been playing mostly clubs up to that point, the Girls — Amy Ray and Emily Saliers — accepted R.E.M.'s offer to play before crowds of 10,000. They did so with only a little trepidation.

"It was probably a good way to go into it actually," Ray says. "We weren't all that nervous, but our

INDIGO GIRLS, performing at UAB Arena. Tickets: \$7 UAB students, \$10 public. Thursday, 8 p.m.

show had to be really tight because we played such a short time. So it probably whipped us into shape."

With songs that trek through the land of love's anguish and anger, life's unanswered questions and the frailties of humanity, the Indigo Girls weren't fooling themselves. They knew they wouldn't be able to get through to everybody in the arena, many of whom "would already be drunk by the time we got there," Ray says.

"(It) was just the realistic knowledge that there would be a certain point that we would not be able to communicate past," she says. "We would try and communicate with the whole room, but we weren't counting on that.

"Some places were pretty good," she recalls. "Birmingham was a pretty good audience. . . . Other places were just awful. People were just rude."

Like fellow folksingers Tracy Chapman, Suzanne Vega and Michelle Shocked, the Indigo Girls are an unlikely success story in these days of big commercial sounds and massive production. Delicate harmonies, solid melodies and somber words are coals in the Indigo Girls' fire and their arresting songs have helped their major label debut, *Indigo Girls*, sell more than 500,000 copies.

It's another in a long line of overnight successes that took years to happen. Saliers and Ray first met as sixth graders in Decatur, Ga., and, by the time they reached high school they were singing as a duo.

As students at Emory University, they adopted the name Indigo Girls. Playing the local clubs and coffeehouses around Atlanta, the pair recorded an EP in 1985, then in 1987 released a full-length album, *Strange Fire*, on their own Indigo label. The album got the attention of Epic Records.

While the two are out on the road, making the most of their current album, Epic will re-release *Strange Fire*, Ray says. The pair isn't planning to record a new album until July, she says.

"It's not taking the place of the last record, but it's there to keep people satisfied," she says.

"Since they 'write all the time,' the two already have material for the second album, although they 'never' write together, Ray says.

"We just have completely different styles of writing," she says.

"My writing is probably a little more abstract and more involved with listening and with images and the senses of sight, sound, taste and feel. Emily is more of a narrative writer and she writes in a narrative style and doesn't really structure things in verse-chorus form."

One thing the two do share is a compulsion to reveal their innermost emotions through their songs. In "Closer to Fine," Saliers expresses her feelings of being lost in a complicated world with lines like "I went to the doctor, I went to the mountains, I looked to the children, I drank from the fountain."

Ray's "Blood and Fire" asks for "someone who can take as much as I give/Give back as much as I need."

Spilling their emotions all over the vinyl is something the two decided a long time ago was central to their music.

"We feel like we're spilling our guts, but we don't worry about being exposed," Ray says. "It's one of those things that we feel like we have to be vulnerable to sing 'this vein of music. And that's a decision we made and we never really think about it."

The tension of the lyrics is enhanced by the tenseness in Ray's and Saliers' vocals. Wrapping around each other like kudzu vines, the harmonies duck and weave, Saliers' wispy vocals dancing along as counterpoint to Ray's husky voice. Often, while one sings a line,

the other is harmonizing with a completely different set of words.

Yet, while the reviewers have hailed the album *Indigo Girls* as a whole, the somberness of the lyrics has received its share of criticism. Critics have said the Indigo Girls need to lighten up, quit living up to their name so much. Ray says they've heard the comments and may have been affected by them subconsciously, but she stands behind the songs.

"In places, lines might have been a little melodramatic or something, but sometimes they fit like that and you just have to leave them because that's the way you feel," she says.

"You have to be a really good writer to get around some of those things. As for reviews and all that stuff, it bothers me, but it doesn't make me want to change. The thing that makes me want to change is listening to Bob Dylan, and you think, 'Wow, irony would be something that's really cool to put in a song.'"

A wave of acoustic playing has swept across the country with acts such as Chapman, Vega, Lyle Lovett, Nanci Griffith and James McMurtry finding themselves in high demand. Ray says burgeoning interest in acts with something to say obviously has helped the Indigo Girls' cause.

"The whole movement probably helped us, the whole singer-songwriter thing," she says. "It's more acceptable to be socially conscious now. It's probably a trend, as a matter of fact. Everything has sort of opened up a little bit."

The current attention to their songs doesn't make them feel more self-conscious, Ray says. The fact that people are actually listening to their music won't make them change their writing styles, she says.

"That's the way we always felt. We always felt that the kind of music we were making was sacred to that extent, that we were responsible to our listeners for what they were hearing. Not that it was of all this great importance, but we felt that people were listening to us." □

Spirituality colors the music of Indigo Girls duo

By Lisa Taylor

DATEBOOK ASSISTANT EDITOR

If you've always thought of indigo as just a color, think again. These days, indigo also may bring to mind acoustic folk duo Indigo Girls.

Although the name for the Georgia duo literally was chosen by leafing through a dictionary, the earthy connotations of the word work well to define the Indigo Girls' down-to-earth, sobering lyrics and music.

On their self-titled album, which already has sold more than 500,000 copies and is on Rolling Stone's Top 20 album chart, Emily Saliers and Amy Ray offer insight on lost love, found love and self-discovery. One music critic called it the "best debut album so far this year."

Accompanied by their Georgia pals from R.E.M. and produced by R.E.M.'s Scott Litt, the Indigo Girls' album is not yet another folk release to be added to the ever-increasing stack of "new folk" records.

So far comparisons to Fairport Convention, early Jefferson Airplane, It's a Beautiful Day, Bob Dylan and Joni Mitchell have been cited by music critics enamored of the duo.

The sudden attention has been a surprise, said Saliers, who met her partner Ray in the sixth grade. "But since we didn't have any expectations, everything's been very pleasant so far."

Well, almost everything. Saliers and Ray have had to get used to some negative publicity along with all the positive. In a review of their show in New York City, The New York Times "stabbed at us, and really hurt our feelings, saying we were pretentious. That was a hard knock."

"That bothered us, but now we know that what's important is that our fans find our music uplifting."

Saliers' father is a minister, and Ray majored in religion, so it's not

surprising that some are inspired by their music.

"Spirituality comes naturally, though we don't have any particular message in mind," Saliers said.

"We're writing songs from personal experience. People can hook up with our work, which makes the world seem smaller. It makes it emotionally satisfying for them."

Saliers and Ray's success is no overnight story. Their first release was a single on their own label in 1985, followed by an EP in 1986 and the 1987 LP, "Strange Fire," which included "Blood and Fire" and "Land of Canaan," two selections also on their debut Epic release.

Originally, Ray did the duo's promotion, working college radio as much as possible. "It was hard work though, and not that many people ended up getting to hear our music," Saliers said.

Although they had to give up their independent status when they signed with Epic in 1988, the national exposure of their music has been worth it, Saliers said.

"Amy is having a hard time giving up control of the business end of it and getting used to the fact that the record company is in it for the money."

The other pressures of being newly signed include the constant touring and air travel.

"It's hard to keep your friendships except with those you've known for a very long time. It's been a real adjustment period."

With a gold album, appearances on the "Today Show," "Late Night With David Letterman" and "The Pat Sajak Show," the duo is moving ahead nicely.

The Indigo Girls will perform tonight at the Arcadia, 2005 Greenville. Gemini, another folk duo from Georgia, will open at 8 p.m. Tickets \$18.50 (plus surcharge) at Rainbow-Ticketmaster, 787-2000.



Acoustic-folk duo Indigo Girls — Amy Ray and Emily Saliers — play music with a down-to-earth quality on their Top 20 album.

We're writing songs from personal experience. People can hook up with our work, which makes the world seem smaller. It makes it emotionally satisfying for them.

Emily Saliers

From The Dallas Morning News, October 9, 1989:

Anything but blue: Indigo Girls shine

By Russell Smith

Pop Music Critic of The Dallas Morning News

Indigo Girls' debut album tends toward the immaculate — like a room full of stately furniture no one's allowed to sit on. The duo's impressive Friday night concert at the Arcadia Theatre, fortunately, had a more accessible, lived-in quality about it.

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This is essentially a folk act, inasmuch as acoustic guitars, traditional harmonies and intelligent songwriting constitute folk. But Indigo Girls, live, is more soulful than seamless, more earthy than ethereal.

Beginning with *Closer to Fine*, the talented Georgia twosome, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, played for about an hour and a half Friday to an eager, sold-out crowd.

The performers held up nicely through various sound problems that several times left Ms. Saliers

Indigo Girls more accessible in Arcadia show

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to field questions shouted from the audience.

"What's it like to be famous?" yelled an apparent longtime fan.

"We're not famous," answered the singer.

Ms. Saliers also joked about Indigo Girls' image as harbingers of gloom.

"We are serious girls, though," she said.

One album's worth of material, of course, is not enough to fill out a 90-minute show. So there was one new song — the country-bluesy, Los Angeles-inspired *Welcome Me* — and a few from a previous, independently released album that soon will be re-released on the band's new label, Epic.

Throughout, the performance

rested on the sense of balance characterized by the two women's different, but wholly complementary, styles. Ms. Ray, the more dominant performer, ripped out her leads like a sultry saloon crooner, while Ms. Saliers lightened the effect with gently soaring harmonies.

Indigo Girls was at the height of its powers Friday during the lovely, if foreboding, *Prince of Darkness*:

*Now someone's on the telephone
desperate in his pain*

*Someone's on the bathroom floor
doing her cocaine*

*Someone's got his finger on the
button in some room*

*No one can convince me we aren't
gluttons for our doom.*

Toward concert's end came the

duo's usually effective reworkings of other people's songs — from the old standard *Summertime* to a stunning a cappella rendition of Paul Simon's moving and often overlooked *An American Tune*.

Indigo Girls brought out its opening act, Gemini (another folk duo), for a rousing group effort on *Love of the Common People*. Though *An American Tune* would have made for a more powerful, albeit somber, ending, Ms. Ray and Ms. Saliers closed the concert one song later with an energetic but characterless reading of Bob Dylan's *All Along the Watchtower*.

All in all, a most minor nit to pick in a show where so much went so right.

From The Macon Telegraph And News, October 13, 1989:

Charity just form of sincerity for Atlanta's Indigo Girls

By Marty Berry
Macon Telegraph and News

It is characteristic of Indigo Girl Amy Ray that she makes time in a brief phone interview to get in a plug for up-and-coming musician Shawn Colvin.

"She's amazing," Ray said of the New York singer/songwriter, whom she called "the best woman I've heard!" (and whose debut album, "Steady On," comes out this Tuesday on Columbia, for the record).

Sharing the spotlight - which in their case is growing larger each day - is part of what Atlanta's Indigo Girls are all about.

For one thing, Ray and musical partner Emily Saliers, who are performing at Victorian Village tonight, have made a practice of giving the warm-up spot in their concerts to acts they want to boost, such as tonight's opener, Gemini.

The duo's Oct. 30 concert at the Fox Theatre in Atlanta, while three-quarters Indigo Girls, will devote the remainder of its time to appearances by some of the Atlanta musicians Ray and Saliers have worked with over the years, such as DeDe Vogt and Michelle Malone.

That show also will benefit Atlanta's AIDS Research Consortium and other AIDS-related organizations; Child Con, a children's advocacy group; and other community outreach organizations.

Having the ability to make a difference in the world is one of the perks of success in today's pop music world, and to Ray, it's one of the obligations.

WHAT: Indigo Girls in concert, with Gemini opening.
WHERE: Victorian Village, 1841 Hardeman Avenue.
WHEN: 8 p.m. Friday, Oct. 13.
COST: General admission tickets \$12.50.

"Politics is something I feel an individual responsibility for," Ray said. "I don't think everyone feels that way, but because music took all my time over the last eight years, I decided to do stuff - to raise money, do benefits, to try to become more informed on the different issues.

"It sounds sappy - and it is - but I want to be able to do something for humanity. I want to become more clear on what the issues are all about, and do something concrete. Music makes it work."

And music, after all, is the major part of what Ray and Saliers are about - pure music, both in the sense of artistry and as a gift incorruptible by the success it has brought them.

That success, courtesy of their self-titled, major-label debut album, has taken them from playing clubs around Atlanta to headlining their own national tour in little more than half a year.

The album, on Epic, went gold near summer's end, largely on the strength of college radio play, and then slipped into the mainstream, where it has been hovering in or around the top 20 on several major rock charts ever since. Epic now plans an early November re-release of "Strange Fire," an album Ray and Saliers recorded several years ago on their own Indigo label.

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Indigo

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Success has taken its toll on the duo's free time, keeping them on the road almost nonstop since February, with more tours planned through February 1990. After a few more months of shows in the U.S. and Europe, they will travel to Japan, Australia, and Hawaii, Ray said.

But nobody's complaining - least of all the Indigo Girls.

"The success is positive," Ray said. "It just is. Whenever I get bummed out because I don't have time, I have to remember, this is what I wanted. The only thing is, to make sure everything stays pure.

"It gets me, but I never had time back in high school, either. Eight years ago we were booking ourselves, and there was no time then,

either. It's always been 24 hours a day, because I love it so much. I can't even begin to complain."

After the winter tours, Ray said the two will need about four months "off" to write and try out new songs around Atlanta, before going into the studio again sometime in the summer.

"Emily has a hard time writing on the road, because she has to have time and space by herself," Ray said. "I pretty much thrive on not having space. The struggle helps me - it creates a need for release."

While Saliers' contributions, particularly on the album, are distinctly folk (she tends to rock a little live, with touches of gospel and blues), Ray's are rock 'n' roll all the way.

"I like the passion, the rage - the edge," Ray said. "I guess they don't influence me musically, really, but they inspire me to write."

Tickets still remain for tonight's show