

# lifeblood

the unofficial go-head journal

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## INDIGO'S ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Late September saw Amy and Emily heading back out on the road again, dates are hard to come by but this is what I have so far:

|      |    |                            |                      |
|------|----|----------------------------|----------------------|
| Sept | 24 | Paoli Solieri              | Santa Fe, New Mexico |
|      | 25 | Ford Ampitheatre           | Vale, Colorado       |
|      | 27 | Hearnes Center Arena       | Columbia, Missouri   |
|      | 28 | Luther College             | Decorah, Iowa        |
|      | 30 | Arie Crown                 | Chicago, Illinois    |
| Oct  | 3  | I.U. Auditorium            | Bloomington, Indiana |
|      | 4  | Music Hall                 | Cincinnati, Ohio     |
|      | 5  | Stephan Center             | Southbend, Indiana   |
|      | 7  | Kalamazoo State Th.        | Kalamazoo, Michigan  |
|      | 8  | Hill Auditorium            | Anne Arbor, Michigan |
|      | 9  | E.J. Thomas                | Akron, Ohio          |
|      | 11 | Ohio Theatre               | Columbus, Ohio       |
| Nov  | 7  | Beginning of European Tour |                      |
|      | 21 |                            | London, England      |
|      | 22 | Last Euro Date             | London, England      |

Michelle Malone is scheduled to open all the U.S. dates. After leaving the mid-west the tour is supposed to head toward the northeast but I don't have any specific dates.

No back page this month, too much else to print. Take care and be well -

*Caron* ..

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From Goldmine, July 22, 1994:

## INDIGO GIRLS

Swamp Ophelia

Epic (EK 57621)

With an alluring title like *Swamp Ophelia*, the Indigo Girls instantly pique our curiosity—could it be that these established folkies are up to something new? The answer to that is yes and no. On their fifth full-length disc, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers serve up plenty of their trademark harmonies and acoustic strumming but it's obvious that the singer/songwriters have reached a musical crossroads of sorts.

On *Swamp Ophelia* the duo travels down some new musical roads similar to the ones they briefly visited on 1992's *Rites Of Passage*. Both Ray and Saliers turned 30 this year and they've realized that they don't want to be navel gazing into middle age, so the pair have set out to expand on their folk outlook and sound. The problem is, as with many new journeys, the going gets a bit rough at times.

The first single, the jagged "Touch Me Fall," is the most ambitious of the disc's 11 tracks and a good indication of where the Indigos' sound may be going. The girls' first all-electric outing features multi-instrumentation and even breaks into a mini-symphony mid-song, not exactly what you'd call folk music.

Ray's lyrics also signal a departure from her past work as she tackles some decidedly darker themes. The pensive "Dead Man's Hill" is based on her memory of seeing high school boys set cats on fire and "This Train Revised" is a reworking of a traditional gospel song in which she explores the Nazis' persecution of homosexuals and Gypsies during World War II.

Saliers plays it a little closer to home, as her songs tend to focus on love gone wrong. While she flirts with orchestration on tracks like "The Wood Song," she sounds most comfortable on "Fare Thee Well" accompanied only by her acoustic guitar. On "Least Complicated," Saliers' gentle soprano blends so beautifully with Ray's unique rasp that it's easy to un-

derstand why the pair has earned such a devoted following over the years. But the superb vocal interplay of the Georgia duo isn't able to smooth over *Swamp Ophelia's* rough spots.

The problem is that the Indigos try so hard to do something new that they often lose sight of what they do best, write good songs. Where are the pop-flavored hooks that have made songs like "Closer To Fine" and "Prince Of Darkness" college radio favorites? Tracks like "Mystery" and "Fugitive" are so tuneless that they are barely distinguishable from each other. In fact, Saliers' "Power Of Two" is as close to hummable as anything on *Swamp Ophelia* gets.

Ray and Saliers have assembled all the right ingredients to make a challenging record: they've beefed up the arrangements, broadened their lyrics and brought in some top-flight guest artist (the Roches, Jane Siberry, etc.) but what they forgot to include is a consistent group of songs.

*Swamp Ophelia* shows some great promise ("Touch Me Fall," "This Train Revised") and the vocals are as enjoyable as ever. But the Indigo Girls seem to be experiencing some growing pains at this point in their career. Hopefully, they will have settled into their skin by the next disc.

Sheryl Hunter

From The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, date unknown:

# 'Girls' raise rainbow above crowd

By Sonia Murray  
POP MUSIC CRITIC

The dreary skies and slick roads may have hindered the more cautious in the metro area from venturing to town, but those with tickets to the Indigo Girls sold-out performance Sunday night saw a rainbow in the "come-what-may, we'll-be-all-right" tunes crafted by the Grammy award-winning local favorites.

"Ah, man, we had to close the pool 30 minutes early because thunderstorms were threatening," said lifeguard Faith Proctor. "But I was, like, 'Cool, that means I'll be able to get to Chastain Park [Amphitheatre] even earlier.' The fun starts earlier."

"This is really a big night for me because I have all of their albums, but have never had a chance to see them perform," added Becky Bruce, who, despite the pangs of a bad fish dinner, was "glad to be out to support the local scene."

And the scene, or "the community" as some called it, was out in force. Gerard McHugh, of Indigo Girl Amy Ray's Decatur-based record label Daemon Records, shook hands and sipped beers with fellow Eddie's Attic frequenters. Others spotted from the local acoustic crowd were DeDe Vogt, Kim Eickhoff... and wait, isn't that Lisa Sullivan — or "Sulli" as "the community" knows her — who used to "guitar tune" with Kristen Hall?

Yes. The bangs-in-my-face, shirt-out-my-pants, Rolling Rock-swigging crowd was there elbow to elbow with the Lexus-driving, starched-linen, "I brought my own Merlot" set and neither seemed to notice.

The focus was on the stage. Some two hours and 19 minutes after the tickets said the show was to start, it did. The crowd was civil toward the unannounced opening acts — The Atlanta Pipe Band and Viva La Diva — but it was clear from the roar that



RICH MAHAN / Staff

Amy Ray (left) and Emily Saliers of the Indigo Girls drew both the Rolling Rock and the Merlot crowds to Chastain Park Amphitheatre.

## CONCERT REVIEW

### Indigo Girls

Sunday night and tonight, \$23.50, but few tickets available. 7 p.m. Chastain Park Amphitheatre. 249-6400.

## THE VERDICT

It only took two guitars, two singers and countless fans for the hometown duo to make good with their homespun blend of folk/rock.

greeted Ray and Emily Saliers that the preliminary performers hardly pacified.

Conversations quieted and noise from tingling wine glasses was down to an occasional ting — two rare occurrences at the usual chatterbox site — as the duo launched into the first

tune of the evening, "Strange Fire."

Dressed in tousled T-shirts, jeans and boots against an equally unfettered backdrop of three lightly painted tarps, Ray and Saliers passed on having a band and overbearing stage hype to give the attentive crowd room to completely savor their tales of the travels of heart and soul.

At one point the mood had become so pensive that Saliers had to prompt the audience. "We don't want you to feel inhibited by your picnics," she said. "Stand up on the tables if you like." Though they strummed through such favorites as "Galileo" and "Ghost" and a welcomed helping from their latest album, "Swamp Ophelia," it didn't get that boisterous.

The two young acoustic guitar players from the Trackside Tavern had returned home, and their fans could only sit back in amazement and think: My, how you've grown.

From Decatur Community Review, August 1994:

## Formidable Acoustic Talent

by Julia Glenn Carter

# MULLINS RELEASES NEW CD

When there's a new talent out there that captures your heart and imagination, finding a means of expressing that without sounding like you wrote the book on review cliches can be difficult. Face it. A lot of musical groups have come and gone since the baby boomers started booming, and as they say, there are no original ideas out there, just rehashed good ones.

Into that murky critics' pool the talented Shawn Mullins falls. As unintentionally unkind as it may sound, there is nothing intrinsically original about his music. Acoustic music, some people call it folk music, has been around for a long time. Yet, his songs pull at your heart and mind with the same gentle, precision-like manner that his fingers work the strings of his guitar. His themes, heavy on the love-inspired, conjure up emotional subtleties often too deep to be evoked by lesser songwriters. Out of a well-developed genre whose music can sometimes sound too inbred, his voice commands your attention. He's just darn good.

We're fortunate here in Decatur that he still plays locally fairly often. But he opened for the Indigo Girls in Chastain Park on July 25th, and recently released a new CD, *Big Blue Sky*, so don't count on him being so available for long. Eddie's Attic and Rainy Day Records in Toco Hills are good places to keep an eye out for him.

Since Mullins has chosen to go the self-promotion route for the time being, you might have to put a little effort into finding his music. His last CD, *Better Days*, as well as *Big Blue Sky*, though, are well worth the investment. "He's one of the big talents in the group of younger, up-and-coming acoustic musicians," said Perry Thompson of Rainy Day Records, one of Mullins' distribution sites.

Mullins' grandfather, a big band bass player who performed frequently at the Fox, was very influential in his musical development. It was from his grandfa-

ther that Mullins received his ear training. Listening to his music, you get the sense that Mullins mastered the art of listening.

At about 10-years-old, Mullins switched from piano to guitar, and played, as kids do, with a lot of hope and little confidence. When Shawn was in ninth grade, though, a chance encounter with Amy Ray (of the pre-Indigo Girls group Saliers and Ray) pushed him along destiny's path.

Ray paid a visit to Mullins' school at the request

of her friend, a Clarkston High career counselor, to talk with the students about the life of a musician. Mullins, who played for the gathering, obviously impressed Ray, for she took the time shortly afterwards to write him a warm letter of encouragement. Ray even suggested that Mullins play with Saliers and her some, but since it involved working in a bar, Mullins' mother nixed the idea. "It was a 'follow your dreams' kind of letter," he said, "and it really encouraged me."

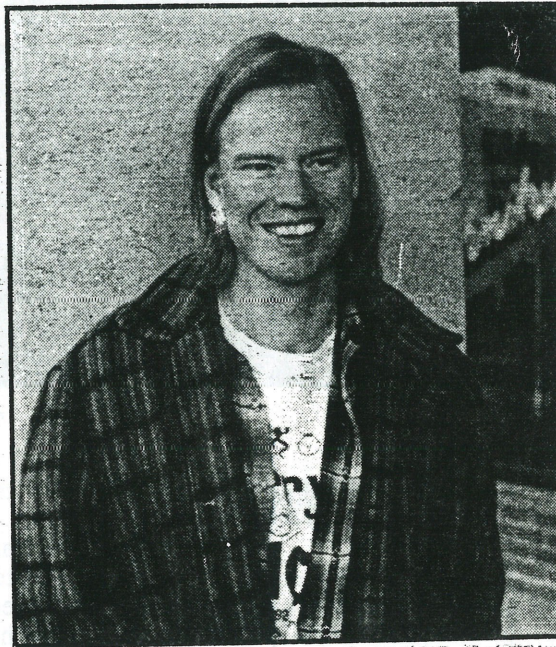
That same year Mullins won \$100 at a talent contest. "That experience demonstrated that I

could write and sing for others, and actually get paid for it. Wow! \$100! That's more than I get paid sometimes now."

Mullins' experience demonstrates the value of art curriculum in school. "There's not enough emphasis on the arts in our country. That's not where the money is. That's not where the emphasis is. That's not the way you compete with the Japanese."

"My school experience had been pretty horrible up to that point. I don't necessarily blame the educational system. That's too easily done. I just know that the only time I felt successful was when I was on stage or running track. I still do both every day."

We can all be grateful that another artist survived the system. Be sure to pick up Mullins' CD or tape, and when the opportunity presents itself, check him out in person.



Shawn Mullins

## From Stereo Review, August 1994:

### INDIGO GIRLS

Swamp Ophelia

EPIC 57621 (51 min)

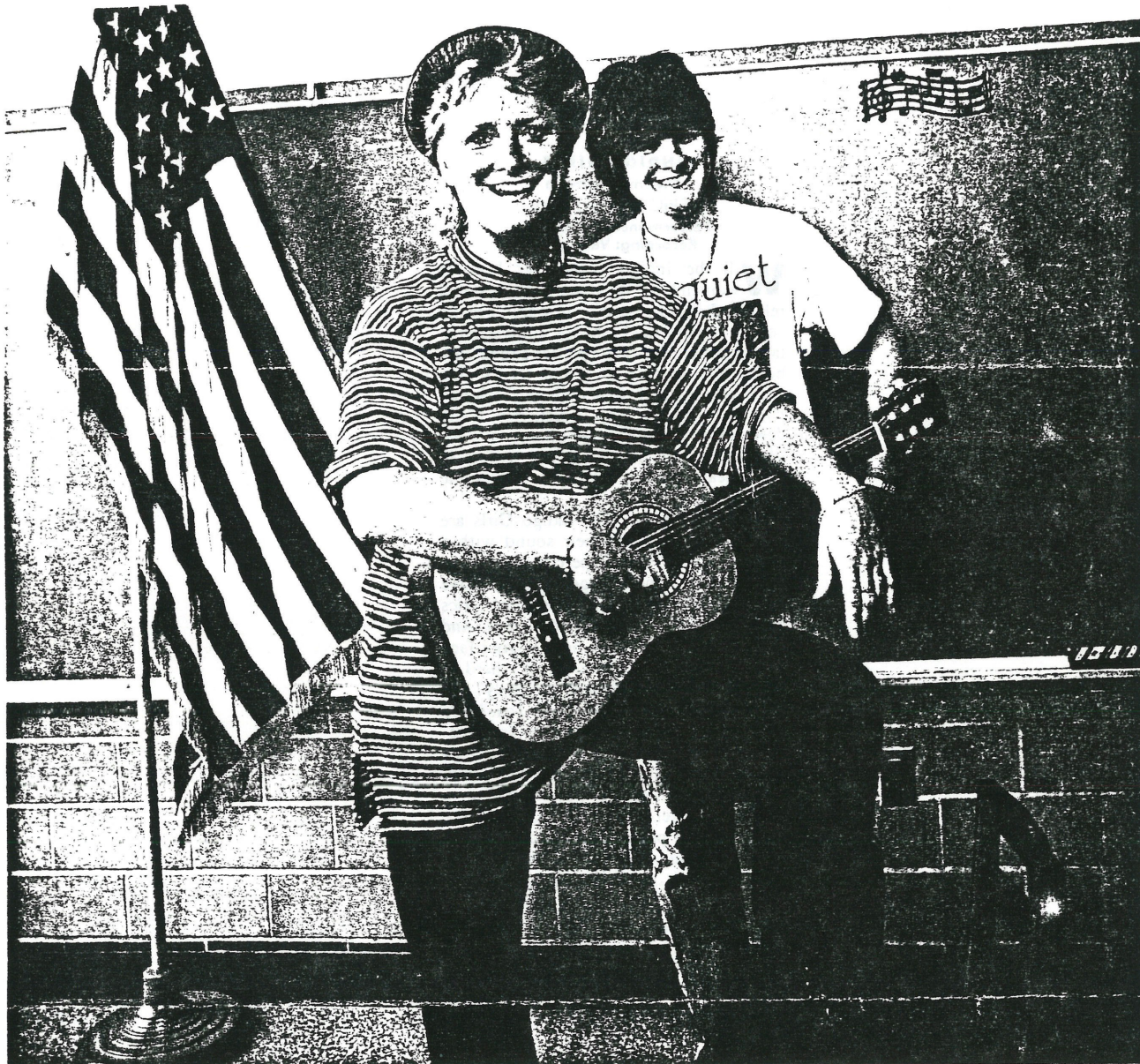
Performance: Pretentious

Recording: Very good

**W**ill the Indigo Girls ever become women? On their sixth major-label release, their tone poems (they aren't really songs) remain unabashedly adolescent—talking of spin-the-bottle parties and intense high-school crushes gone sour. The Indigo Girls are stuck in that college-freshman phase where everything is just, like, really deep. They're feeling major, like, really *esoteric* pain, and they want you to feel it, too. I mean, hey, aren't we all in this karmic bed together?

Well, yes and no. The Indigo Girls are folkies who dress up their sound with a gaggle of acoustic and percussion instruments, and it's the arrangements that save them, because underneath the opaque lyrics are (very) slight melodies and themes. And while they may have big, right-in-your-face voices, what's the point when it's hard to take the rest of what they do seriously? For example, the worst track here, *Touch Me Fall*, goes off into string-quartet and free-form-jazz noodling that virtually defines the word pretension. To be fair, the album does have its moments: *Power of Two*, a Seventies singer-songwriter (can you say Carole King?) pronouncement about a romantic getaway, and *This Train Revised*, which works because of coherent lyrics, dynamic percussion and strings, and passionately intertwined voices. Here, for once, the Indigos hit upon a strategy beyond their usual pathetic whining. Hey, Girls: Angst is angst, but it's listenable only when applied to something more tragic than Zen. A.N.

From People, August 8, 1994:



A Emily Saliers (left) was in sixth grade and Amy Ray in fifth when they first met, at the Laurel Ridge Elementary School in Decatur (above).

## OUT OF THE BLUE

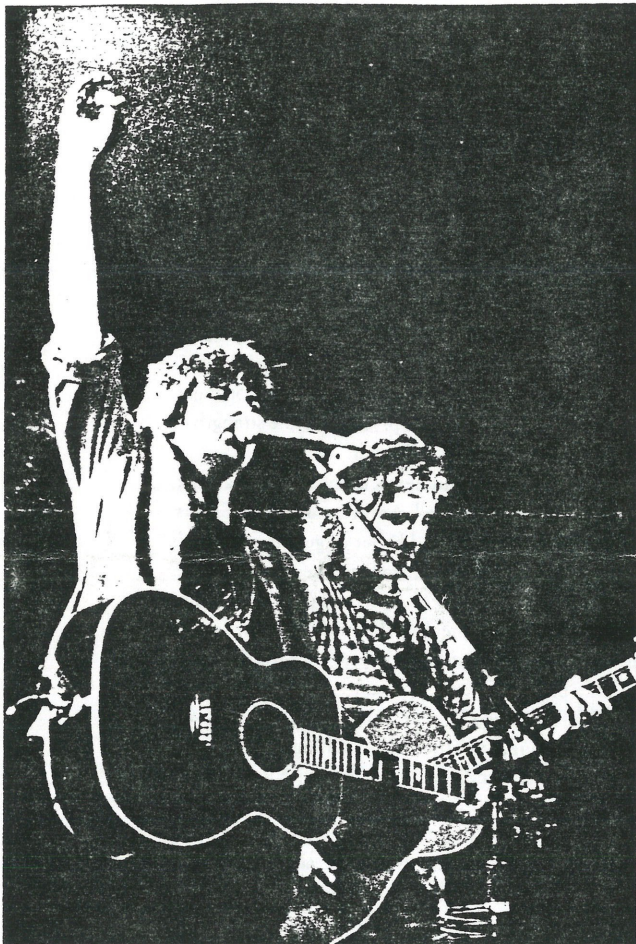
After singing together since they were kids, Georgia's Indigo Girls are finally hitting the charts

**T**HEY MAY PREFER FAULKNER TO Krantz and Georgia kudzu to Hollywood and Vine, but Indigo Girls Amy Ray and Emily Saliers still felt right down home while making their first movie in Tucson last April. Of course *Boys on the Side*, an AIDS drama due next year starring Whoopi Goldberg, features the folk-rock duo

as—surprise!—a folk-rock duo. “It was a blast,” says Saliers, 31. Ray, 30, found working with Goldberg especially rewarding: “I dropped my guitar in the elevator—this 1947 Martin—and it cracked. Whoopi managed to find the same model and year and gave it to me on the set. This was *so* nice. Of course, everyone im-

mediately went over saying, ‘Whoopi, I cracked my Saab . . .’”

Despite their good-time acting debut, however, don't expect the Girls to go Hollywood anytime soon. Fans who cherish their spirit-stirring vocals, emotion-packed lyrics and glitz-free stage personae would think it a crime. And besides, Ray and Saliers, on a world tour that will keep them away from their Georgia homes until 1995, simply haven't the time. After years of cult popularity, the pair are much in demand since their sixth album of folk-rock tunes, *Swamp Ophelia*, landed smack in the middle of the mainstream hit parade. Hitting ▶



*Billboard's* pop album chart at No. 9 last May, *Ophelia* stands out in pop's grunge- and rap-strewn field like the rare plant it's named after. Blooming with what *TIME* calls the "braided harmonies" of Ray's forceful alto and Saliers' ethereal soprano, the album also offers lyric jolts, especially in "This Train (Revised)," inspired by a recent visit to Washington's Holocaust Museum: "Piss and blood in a railroad car/ 100 people, Gypsies, queers and David's Star."

Though both women are openly gay, they rarely allude explicitly to sexual orientation in song. "We've been out for a long time in our private lives," says Saliers. "But only recently have we begun talking about it publicly. I don't want our being gay to become our [career] focus. To tell you the truth, I don't really think of myself as gay—I think of myself as me." Ray, who compares the gay-rights movement to the civil-rights struggle of the '60s, disagrees. "I want to stand up and say, 'This is my choice. I'm gay and I'm a nice person.'"

Such differences of attitude abound, despite many common bonds. Ray, the more introspective of the two, grew up in Decatur, Ga., where her father, Dr. Larry Ray, is a radiologist and her mother, Frances, a housewife. She met Saliers in Decatur after the latter moved there from New Haven in 1974 with her father, Don, a Methodist minister and Emory University religion professor, her mother, Jane, a librarian, and her three sisters. Amy and Emily, who met in elementary school, both wrote poetry ("terrible stuff," says Ray) and sang in their high school chorus before forming a duo—Saliers and Ray—in 1980.

In 1983, while both were undergraduates at Emory, they began playing clubs as the Indigo Girls—"I liked the way [the name] sounded," says Ray. Two years later they began recording their songs with money borrowed from Ray's father. Signed by Epic Records in 1988, they scored with their platinum debut album, *Indigo Girls*, the following year. "We've never had the typical aspirations to



▲ "My parents encouraged me to be extremely independent," says Amy of her backstage visitors last June.

◀ "They can harmonize in their sleep," says a friend of the duo. But offstage "we give each other lots of space," says Saliers.

fame and wealth," says Saliers. "So everything that's happened has been a wonderful surprise."

Almost everything, anyway. "Success is nice," says Saliers, "but I've become less tolerant of people shoving a camera in my face." And so the two closely guard their private lives. "I live in the middle of the woods," says Ray of the cabin she shares with her girlfriend, Cooper Seay, a fellow singer, and their four dogs—"all strays and mongrels"—outside Atlanta. "I ride my mountain bike [and] I write my songs in the middle of the night on my screen porch. But mostly I just study the forest and the birds and mushrooms." The more citified Saliers lives in Atlanta with her longtime partner, Susan Owens, owner of the Common Pond, a store Saliers helped finance that sells merchandise made from recycled materials.

The Girls write their songs separately and rarely hang out when not on the road or in the recording studio. "Together we don't have the kind of friendship where we call each other to take in a movie," says Saliers. "Which is probably why our relationship is so strong."

Now that their tour is underway, the mood Indigo is definitely upbeat. And though the two look forward to seeing themselves in *Boys on the Side* next year, they differ on how much tinsel they can take. While Saliers hopes to act again, Ray says she doesn't have the patience. "I'm just too hyper," she says. "I can't sit on a set for 12 hours." Luckily for the Girls and their fans, there is another outlet. "When we play," says Saliers, "we are insatiable."

■ STEVE DOLGHERTY

■ GAIL CAMERON WESCOTT in Decatur

From The Rocket, August 10, 1994:

# Indigo Demon Swamp Walt

by Veronika Kalmar

The Indigo Girls are alternative folk answers to the Sirenic Prayer. They create melodies which adopt fate's disparities and strive to restore peace rather than music that throws a tantrum about the inevitable. Screaming is easier to listen to when you're used to hearing, but eventually, you scream yourself out, or die. The Indigo Girls don't make music for those marred with confusion or anger. Instead, they proffer modern-day folklore to ease the psyche. It's the strength of possessing independence rather than the rage of seeking it.

The Indigo Girls' swamp waltz balances indie rock and traditional folk, creative freedom and mass marketing, and most of all, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers. At their best, the Indigo Girls dance a well-crafted ballet of guitars and vocals through a lyrical mine field of personal and social demons. They know no fear. That's evidenced not only by the raw intimacy of their lyrics but by the musical chances they brave. A folkie and an indie girl melding their influences in a sound assured to engender ostracism by ignorant purists of both camps. To top it off, they prove commercially viable in the process. *Swamp Ophelia* went gold in 10 weeks.

Funny thing: honesty sells. The Indigo Girls test the theory of supply and demand. Face it, the world is starving for the self-searching, preacherless, teacherless smorgasbord spirituality the Indigo Girls offer. Initially, Ray and Saliers were shunned by folkies and they first gained acceptance in underground clubs. Now, since they dared to orchestrate their recent releases with strings and African drums and stir rather than bludgeon the psyche, the alternative world wants to shove them into the realm of AAA radio. Fine. The same river of self-substantiation that bore the Indigo Girls from their beginning as street corner minstrels to their latest release will carry them to their next destination, with a pit stop at Pier 62/63 for two sold-out Seattle shows and at the Edgefield Amphitheater in Troutdale, OR.

To strip down to their purest elements, the Indigo Girls dropped their band for this first jaunt around the states. Once finished, they'll head out again with backup so if you miss these shows, they promise to return. "The show is sometimes a little rowdier without the band—it's a weird phenomenon," says Amy Ray over the phone and through a muffled headset. Her rich voice sounds a little tinny. "The energy is probably a little more focused from us out into the audience because the whole show is on our shoulders. It's also a little more spontaneous. It's easier for us to change things around because we're so used to each other. We can make things longer or shorter and not even have to tell each other that we're doing it."

Friends for 20 years, the two Indigos met in an Atlanta elementary school. Saliers was in sixth grade, Ray in fifth. They joined forces musically in high school under the moniker Saliers & Ray and opted to change their name to the Indigo Girls while at Emory College. Ray pulled the word for the herb-based dye out of a dictionary and being both colorful and earthy, it stuck. The Indigo Girls released their debut single "Crazy Game/Someone Come Home" on the Indigo label. Then they released an EP, *Indigo Girls*, produced by Drivin' Nuts, with members Frank French and Kristen Hall. The first full length, *Strange Fire*, again on the Indigo label, followed in 1987. It's a collection of indie folk.

Epic snapped the duo up the same year. The relationship would allow the Indigo Girls both the creative freedom and the financial resources necessary to produce the complex sounds they desired. "We really like our record label," says Ray. "I'm into the independent world and that's where we've managed to operate within the realm of Epic and still feel like we're independent. They're still corporate. You can't deny that, but we do what we want to do. The trick is to put your foot down the first day and then to deal out desperation. The other trick is to understand your record company is made up of people and they need your respect as much as you want theirs. The people we work closely with from our label are often times not their big music fans. If we're tired and can't do something or if we don't like the way something is being presented, we talk to them about it as other people and not as the evil label. Usually we get results and they do what we want them to do."



Nothing demonstrates the beauty and respect of the marriage between talent and label more than the cut "This Train (Revised)" on *Swamp Ophelia*. Based on a traditional gospel song, Ray manipulated the lyrics to address the Holocaust in graphic visions. Three vocal tracks (drummer Michael Lorant lends his vocals) weave images into a complicated fabric of two acoustic and one electric guitar, dobro, bass, two violins, viola and cello. The contrast of the mournful strings and the eerie dobro create an ethereal menagerie of instrumentation. Add in warped

lyrics about counted bones and pulled teeth and you've got something other than the normal Top 40 hit. The production was inevitably expensive, and the vision undoubtedly free. "This Train" demonstrates the Indigo Girls at their best: combining complex song construction with sharp shot production and addressing painful issues that most would prefer not think about with poetic bluntness.

Over the past five years, the Indigo Girls have drawn from an extensive pool of talent to achieve the desired musical effect on their records. They have borrowed from the instrumental and vocal talents of R.E.M., the Hothouse Flowers, Ellen James, Society, the Roches, Siouxsie and the Banshees, Tom Petty's Heartbreakers, as well as former members of the dBs and Gang of Four.

The Indigo Girls bring in those influences to enhance the beautiful chasm created by the duality of their personalities and styles. Both emerged from the singer/songwriter tradition but, through the years, Ray has been drawn to a harder-edged alternative sound. It becomes apparent in numbers like "Touch Me Fall," which bears a heavy, romantic darkness. "When we arrange songs they sort of become a product of both of us. It's very abstract," says Ray.

"There are certain types of harmonies that I'll always think of and there are certain ones Emily will think of," Ray continues. "Hers tend to be more sort of jazzy and have a lot of discord which wouldn't be what I naturally sing. I would be drawn to something what was a little straighter and darker sounding. Arrangement-wise, I tend to do a lot of changes within a song with different dynamics and different time signatures. That's something I do a lot with production—dropping instruments in and out. Emily isn't thinking about engineering things as much as I am. She thinks more about the music itself."

Another *Swamp Ophelia* weaves into her life is Daemon, her indie label which hosts a bevy of folk and punk acts. In addition to offerings by Oblivious, the current band of Holly Hunter from the now defunct Holly and the Italians, and another group called Band de Solé, the label releases a lot of what Ray describes as "weird projects that aren't bands." The most intriguing is a rendition of the soundtrack to *Jesus Christ Superstar*, arranged and produced by Michael Lorant.

"There are hundreds of people involved from the Atlanta scene," she says of the project. "The main cast stays consistent throughout the whole album but the backing musicians change. Different bands do different songs and it's real alternative—in the best of ways. It's a real creative and strong rendition of the musical. I'm Jesus, Emily is Mary and Michael plays Judas. The story is Judas' story and all the other characters are pretty much secondary to him."

The project seems an appropriately spiritual and political pot for the Indigo Girls to stir—even as sous chefs. The story climaxes with Judas' decision to betray his friend, Jesus, for quite legitimate socio-political reasons. Unable to deal with the emotional strife caused by following his conscience in a no-win situation, he hangs himself.

"Fugitive," the opening track to *Swamp Ophelia*, which claims "the curse and the blessing they're one in the same" and "remember this is how it should be," tells a similar tale and offers a more tranquil ending. It leaves us with the idea that the lesson never changes—just the context into which it's shoved. The Indigo Girls seem content to battle those demons, put them in song and share them with whomever wants to listen. ■

(The Indigo Girls will play at Pier 62/63 in Seattle on Aug. 16 and 17 and at the Edgefield Amphitheater in Troutdale, OR on Aug. 18.)

**Indigo Girls  
Tuesday and Wednesday  
August 16 and 17, 1994  
Pier 62/63  
Seattle, Washington**

**Tuesday**

Wow! One week and 4,000 miles (I took a major scenic route) removed from my nice little apartment back home, I found myself sitting on a wooden pier with downtown Seattle on my left and the Puget Sound on my right, waiting in line for the Indigo Girls. Unbelievable.

Karin and I arrived on the waterfront around 11 am, pleased to see that there were only about 15 people in line. It was a beautiful day, about 80 degrees and sunny, not at all what I expected (rain, rain, and more rain). We spent a nice afternoon talking with other fans in line, some who had come from as far away as Anchorage, Alaska, plotting our strategy to get the best possible seats and soaking up the great weather. After while, we were treated to the sounds of Amy and Emily sound checking. Amy is doing some songs in sound check that I am not familiar with, one about being a problem child and having a rough life with a key line "Go go go", one about standing up against injustice with the line "Raise your hands, raise your hands up high Don't take a seat, don't stand in line", and finally one that includes the line "My name is (I couldn't make out the name) and this is my story". What I could hear of all three was great, does anybody know anything else about them? Even though I had gotten out of line and was hanging semi-precariously from a chain link fence, I didn't get to hear much of Emily's sound check, a group of fans had that wandered down to listen ended up talking through it.

At 6 o'clock the gates finally opened and we survived the mad dash to find ourselves in the front row on Amy's side. Too cool. There was about 12 feet of space between the front row and the stage, and Karin explained to me that I had better be on my toes because once Amy and Emily invited the crowd to dance there would be a massive stage rush.

We still had about an hour til show time so I wandered around the pier, what a beautiful venue. If you walked 10 feet off the back of

the stage you would fall in the water, and 25 feet to the right of the stage was a railing and more water. The sun was making it's way towards the ocean and it was spectacular watching it pass through a bank of clouds as the ships sailed by. One thing that took some getting used to was watching people drinking mocha and munching on crab legs and clam chowder before the show. We definitely lack this sophistication back home, where beer and nachos are generally the order of the day.

Feron took the stage at 7:00. I have always heard good things about her, but had not had the opportunity to see her live, so I was pretty excited to hear she was opening the show. She was accompanied by just her acoustic guitar and a stand-up bass player from a local band (she was great but I can't for the life of me remember her name), and proceeded to charm the socks off the crowd. Not only did she play great songs, but she told some great stories. I highly recommend seeing her if you ever get the chance.

Not to long after Feron finished, and just as the sun was setting, Amy and Emily hit the stage with a rousing version of "Strange Fire". I think this is the perfect opening song for them, and was surprised to get to hear it. They looked and sounded great, and seemed to draw even more energy from the crowd, which sang along with every word. The set contained almost all the songs from "Swamp Ophelia" and a great mixture of some of their older stuff too. About four or five songs into the set Emily triggered the stage rush that everyone had clearly been waiting for and I found myself standing one person back from the stage, at Amy's feet, in a happy mass of go-heads. The intensity of the show went up another notch, I swear everyone that had rushed the stage new every word to every song and provided a beautiful background chorus for Emily and Amy, who were clearly enjoying the singing. I'm afraid I was having too good of a time to jot down the set list, some of the things that stood out were "Language And The Kiss", Emily sang the last verse a cappella - it was unbelievable; "White House Blues", Caroline Aiken joined them for a rousing version of this classic; "Chickenman", Amy has added a new section in the middle where she sings "Now I hear the shotgun shiver, another arrow from the quiver" - the crowd stood in hushed awe as she chanted this over and over and then quietly started into the "On the road to Austin" verse; "Least Complicated", Emily and Amy lead us in a "Na-na-na-na-na-na-na" sing along; and "Touch Me Fall" which started off the

encores. It was such an intense performance on both their parts that it is hard to put into words. Amy has one section of the song where she does a kind of stream of conscience thing, on this night she shouted she would not be complacent, racist, sexist, homophobic and a whole bunch of other very intense stuff, all the while Emily was ripping it up on her electric guitar. They left the crowd stunned. Next up was a rousing version of "Closer to Fine", with the crowd continuing to sing along, and finally, Caroline Aiken came out and joined Emily and Amy for a beautiful a cappella version of "Finlandia". The crowd stood in silence as their voices intertwined perfectly, and then all too soon it was over. Despite the clapping, whistling, and screaming of a crowd that had clearly not had enough, the venue had a 10:00 curfew so the house lights came up, but the crowd continued to cheer for quite awhile. What a great night!

### **Wednesday**

Karin and I were up and at 'em early again on Wednesday, arriving at the pier around 10 am to find about 15 people in line again, many of whom we recognized from the day before. Our conversations picked up where they had left off, and another sunny, warm day passed very quickly. Amy and Emily did a brief appearance at a local radio station so we got to listen to that on someone's jam box, and not too much later we were treated to their sound checks once again.

When the gates opened at 6 pm we survived the stampede and found spots in the 3rd and 4th row on Emily's side, once again great seats. Gerkin, a Seattle rock and roll band, opened the show. They were good, but the crowd did not seem to get into them a whole lot.

Finally, it was time for Amy and Emily. They came out and started their set with a stunning version of "Welcome Me". This was the most intense performance I have ever heard of this song. You could see the corded veins in Amy's neck as she put everything she had into every word, and Emily's guitar part and vocals matched her note for note. I had a wonderful view of a near full moon just a little above and in front of Amy - wow! The show never let up, once again there was a stage rush, this time I found myself one person away from the stage on Emily's side, surrounded by another group of sweet singing go-heads. Amy and Emily seemed to be having the times of

their lives as they played a number of songs off Swamp Ophelia, interspersed with "oldies" off their other records. I had goose bumps for most of the show, you could literally feel the energy being passed back and forth between the crowd and the stage. All too soon it was time for the encores, during "Touch Me Fall" Amy's rap involved both sides of a conversation in which one person was telling the other it was time to get up and the other was pleading for a little more sleep, a part about saying "hi" to everyone she meets, and a part similar to the night before about not being complacent. Emily turned in an incredible guitar part, I don't have enough adjectives to describe how great their performance was. Truly this song has taken on a life of it's own. One thing I noticed both nights, a lot of the songs, especially the old ones, had subtle changes in the arrangements and/or vocals from the album versions and what had been played on previous tours. You would be following along getting into a song that you love and know every bit of by heart when boom, they would play a different lick or sing a harmony part a little differently, very cool.

After a rousing version of "Closer To Fine" and a beautiful "Finlandia" that again included wonderful harmony vocals from Caroline Aiken, a very happy looking Amy and Emily left the stage to the thunderous applause of the crowd. The house lights came up immediately, and despite the crowds enthusiasm, the show was over.

Carolyn Spidle  
Plano, Texas

From The News Tribune, August 17, 1994:

## Indigo Girls glow in back-to-basics show

By Stephanie Reader  
The News Tribune

### REVIEW

The Indigo Girls seemed a little ill at ease when they took the Pier 61/62 stage Tuesday evening in Seattle.

Maybe it was the sun illuminating the eager, sold-out crowd of 3,500.

"We're not used to playing in the lightness," Amy Ray said, surveying the scene. "It's like we're dreaming," partner Emily Saliers added.

Maybe the Seattle music mystique had 'em rattled. Ray joked about spotting Soundgarden and other famous rockers on the way into town.

"I'm trying to relax, 'cause I feel so nervous," Ray said. "It must be all those bands wandering the streets."

Either way, the Indigos loosened up an hour into the show, after inviting fans to fill the lonely space between the front row and the 7-foot-high stage.

Ray had coveted a mosh pit. She got one - or at least the folk equivalent. Hundreds of people jammed near but suppressed any urge to slam dance, dive off the stage or pass each other around.

The closer the crowd got, the high-

er the energy of the performers. Ray and Saliers set listeners in motion while ferries blew occasional accompaniment.

The Indigo Girls' latest disc, "Swamp Ophelia," is their most successful and most busy with the work of other musicians, from a fluegelhorn player to a bassist.

Tuesday night, however, they took the stage with only their guitars. It was a return to the stripped-down, sound that first won fans' attention in the late '80s. The crowd ate it up.

Ray and Saliers - who'll do another sold-out show tonight - opened the evening with "Strange Fire," one of their early songs, then landed in the '90s. Love-song specialist Saliers offered sweet versions of her "Least Complicated," "The Power of Two" and "The Wood Song." Ray, the dark

half of the duo, did searing versions of "Fugitive" and "Touch Me Fall."

On the latter, lead guitarist Saliers brought out an electric guitar for some very Seattlesque jams while Ray shouted, "I will not be complacent" "I will not be racist" "I will not be homophobic" and other mid-song meditations. Wow.

It was a pleasure to hear new songs sans the adornment of others. The live "Galileo," off 1992's "Rites of Passage," stood firmly without the strings, backup singers and funky percussion of the CD version.

Ray and Saliers, while enriched by accompaniment, also make beautiful music on their own.

From The Seattle Post-Intelligencer, August 18, 1994:

# Indigo Girls and fans put on a good show

By Peter Blackstock

Special to the P-I

Even if Amy Ray and Emily Saliers had both come down with laryngitis, they still could have pulled off their show Tuesday night at Pier 62/63.

Die-hard fans of the folk-rock duo — who collectively bill themselves as the Indigo Girls — sang along to nearly every song during the show, at times boisterously enough that Ray and Saliers cheerfully backed away from their microphones and let the capacity crowd carry the choruses.

That such a sing-along spirit was possible is a tribute to the Indigo Girls' ability to write indelibly catchy pop songs, with melodies and lyrics that stick in your head long after you've turned off the stereo. Among the standouts of their set were relentlessly upbeat pop numbers such as "Galileo," "Least Complicated" and "Closer to Fine."

More rewarding, however, was a transcendent version of "Strange Fire," the title cut to Girls' first full-length album from 1987. It seemed a particularly appropriate choice given that Ray and Saliers were performing Tuesday night as they did back in those days — without a backing band.

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## Review

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**Indigo Girls** and **Ferron**, Tuesday night at Pier 62/63.

Given the duo format, it would have been nice to hear some of the other long-lost gems from that first album, such as "Land of Canaan" — one of the best pop songs of the '80s even though it was never recognized as such — or Ray's searing solo tune "Blood and Fire."

But with a catalog that has grown to half a dozen records over the past few years, Ray and Saliers would have a hard time playing all the songs that everyone wants to hear. As it was, they concentrated primarily on cuts from their latest record, "Swamp Ophelia," some of which had to be significantly stripped down from their heavily overdubbed studio versions.

Opening act Ferron, a Vashon Island resident, was accompanied by cellist Jamie Sieber of the local group Rumors of the Big Wave for a 45-minute set of moody, evocative songs. It seems a shame that Ferron is often pigeonholed as a "women's movement" performer; her music likely would also appeal to those who appreciate the new-folk sounds of John Gorka and the acoustic atmospheric of Luka Bloom.

**Indigo Girls**  
**Thursday**  
**August 18, 1994**  
**Edgefield Winery**  
**Troutdale, Oregon**

Thursday morning it was up at the crack of dawn (give or take a few hours) and back in the truck to follow Karin to Troutdale, a couple of hours south of Tacoma. I was a little bit sad because this technically marked the beginning of my trip back home, and this would be my last show for now, but "Swamp Ophelia" at 9 million decibels and the fresh, clean air coming in through my rolled down windows as I zipped down the highway lightened my mood considerably.

We arrived at the venue a little before noon, once again finding we were about fifteenth in line. The setting was beautiful. The winery was on the side of a mountain in a very, very old hotel. It was really neat, the hallways had wooden floors and large, old paintings hung in them. The line we sat in was on the grass/sand underneath a pine tree, with a beautiful view of the valley below and the mountain behind. About the only thing that seemed out of place was a prison unit whose razor-wired entrance was about 50 yards behind us, right next to the side of the hotel. Very strange.

We took turns wandering around the grounds and looking around the lobby of the hotel, and were happy to find out they would let us take our pint glasses of beer outside to drink in the shade of the pine tree while we waited in line. I don't think I have ever had better accommodations waiting in line for a show.

Later that afternoon we could hear the sounds of Amy and Emily's guitars being tuned, so I wandered down the chain link fence to see if I could get a glimpse of the sound check. I finally found a two foot wide gap in the protective trees and settled in to listen. The venue itself was really neat. It was a natural bowl of grass with the stage facing up towards the top of the mountain. I ended up getting to see more of the sound check than I got to hear, it was the same story as in Seattle, some fans went to a lot of trouble to get in position to hear, then talked through it.

Finally it was time for the gates to open, since there were no chairs most folks were just interested in staking out a place for their blankets so we joined the very small group that was standing at the



foot of the stage, I ended up right at Amy's feet up against the barricade. The venue was well planned, the stage was high enough so that those of us who wanted to could stand at the front without blocking the view of the people who wanted to sit on their blankets. Everybody seemed happy.

Caroline Aiken opened the show with a short, but terrific set. Even though most of the crowd did not seem to know her music, they listened attentively and sang along where they could. Next up was Gerkin, Amy came out and introduced them, encouraging all of us to be open to their music, the crowd listened but again did not seem to get into them.

After some technical difficulties were cleared up, Amy and Emily came out as happy and pumped up as I think I have ever seen them at the start of the show. They were jamming and singing and smiling at the crowd, I've waited long enough to write this that I can't remember all of the songs, but one thing that stood out in particular was Amy singing "World Falls" while she was staring at the full moon which had just risen over the top of the mountain. The crowd was singing along, a little more laid back than in Seattle, but still very beautiful. A few songs into the set, Emily and Amy had just finished a song and were walking back up to the mics in darkness, when I caught a fast flying object out of the corner of my eye and heard a very loud and sickening "thud". As the lights came up it became clear that someone had thrown a cassette tape in a hard plastic case at Amy, and hit her guitar dead center. Emily shook her head and said something along the line of "Like she's really going to sign you to her label now", and Amy collected herself and said "I don't even need to say anything". As a fan it was the worst moment I've ever had at a show, you could feel the collective guilt and sadness from the crowd as they realized what had happened. After a pause Amy and Emily launched into the next song, they continued to give a great performance but the mood of the show had definitely changed. They seemed a little rushed at the end, just barely slipping in "Finlandia" and disappearing from the stage as the house lights came up and the large clock at the side of the stage struck 10 pm.

Carolyn Spidle  
Plano, Texas

**Indigo Girls**  
**August 16 - 18, 1994**  
**Seattle, Washington / Troutdale, Oregon**

I was lucky enough to catch three Indigo shows this summer, and, along the way, obtained some interesting insights. Although I usually write some sort of review, I've found that I always end up saying the same thing: "It was rockin', man!". Here is a slightly different approach:

What I learned on my summer vacation, via 3 northwest Indigo shows:

- 1) Amy and Emily really like it up here, but not enough to abandon their Georgia roots.
- 2) The crowds, while for the most part very friendly, have gotten a bit possessive. At one point, our group was told to "stand away" from another group that had been waiting longer than we had. I wasn't aware that line space provided control of those behind.
- 3) Amy is once again singing "from her toes".
- 4) Amy's guitar playing has vastly improved. I was impressed.
- 5) Emily is still the guitar goddess.
- 6) The set lists changed every night. I think that the set lists are often changed at the last second, in mid-performance. I like it.
- 7) When running for front row position, it never hurts to have several people cover different areas.
- 8) The fourth row is just as good as the first, once the music starts.
- 9) Caroline Aiken is one of the most sincere musicians I've ever met.

- 10) Caroline's music is worth anyone's time, especially if she's opening for the Girls.
- 11) Amy could sing the phone book, and it would still sound great.
- 12) Coolest new song of this tour: "Fugitive".
- 13) Best new sing-a-long: "Least Complicated".
- 14) Best rearranged older song: "Chickenman".
- 15) My personal faves: "The Wood Song" and a haunting version of "Dead Man's Hill". Sadly, the latter was only played once in three nights.
- 16) Old stuff that still holds water: "Strange Fire", "Center Stage", "Land Of Canaan", "Love's Recovery", "Galileo", and "Welcome Me".
- 17) "Closer To Fine" is probably the best way to end an Indigo show.
- 18) The Girls with no band is the ultimate.
- 19) The stage decor in the background was awesomely designed.
- 20) Although a talented musician, "Joking" sounds better without Barbara Marino's sax. Same goes for "Crazy Game".
- 21) Best song for Amy to release her frustrations: "Touch Me Fall".
- 22) Screams, cheers, applause, questions and general disruptions are probably better off being at the end of a song, not just as Emily has started (or ended) a brilliant guitar solo.
- 23) It's amazing what you can hear when people are quiet (see also #22).
- 24) Projectile gifts of any kind are not appreciated, especially when they bounce off of someone's beautiful, expensive Martin guitar.

- 25) The Girls are intense when they are pissed, but I wouldn't want to be the one that made them that way.
- 26) The shirts were way cool, but also way overpriced.
- 27) Beer on a hot afternoon in the sun while waiting in line will make you sorry later.
- 28) Indigo "one-up" stuff is lame. So what if someone hasn't seen the previous night's show? Don't blow it for those who haven't.
- 29) Indigo addiction is a dangerous thing.
- 30) Groove on the shows that you can. Who knows when the Girls will roll around again?

All in all I found my summer vacation to be a very giddy experience. I met with some nice people, and learned quite alot; some things, however I found to be fact rather than speculation. I hope I get a chance to repeat this type of thing, and I hope that everyone had as much fun during their summer as I did during mine.

Thanks to Emily and Amy for some good rockin' jams!

Karin Dalesky  
Tacoma, Washington