

# lifeblood

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## ANOTHER JCS PERFORMANCE SCHEDULED

Another full cast performance of 'Jesus Christ Superstar - A Resurrection' has been scheduled for March 19 in Austin, Texas, during the South By Southwest music festival. The performance will kick off another round of touring for Amy and Emily and their band, so far here are the dates that are scheduled:

03/19/95	JCS - The Paramount Theatre, Austin, Texas
03/22/95	Rudder Auditorium, College Station, Texas
03/23/95	Laurie Theater, San Antonio, Texas
03/24/95	The Backyard, Austin, Texas
03/25/95	The Backyard, Austin, Texas
03/29/95	Pershing Auditorium, Lincoln, Nebraska
04/01/95	C Y Stephens Auditorium, Ames, Iowa
04/03/95	Shirk Center, Bloomington, Indiana
04/05/95	McDonough Field, Atlanta, Georgia
04/08/95	Market Square Arena, Indianapolis, Indiana
04/09/95	Louisville Gardens, Louisville, Kentucky
04/11/95	Palace Of Auburn Hills, Auburn Hills, Michigan
04/12/95	Ohio University, Athens, Ohio
04/13/95	Toledo Stranahan Theater, Toledo, Ohio
04/14/95	Central Michigan University, Mt. Pleasant, Michigan
04/16/95	Civic Center, Erie, Pennsylvania
04/18/95	Dartmouth College, Hanover, New Hampshire
04/19/95	Burlington Memorial Auditorium, Burlington, Vermont
04/20/95	Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island
04/21/95	Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, New York
04/27/95	Stabler Arena, Bethlehem, Pennsylvania

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From Deneuve, December 1994:

# SWAMP

AN INTERVIEW WITH **AMY RAY**  
OF THE INDIGO GIRLS

# OPHELIA

AN DENEUVE EXCLUSIVE BY VICTORIA A. BROWN WORTH

The Indigo Girls, Georgia musicians Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, are one of the hottest young rock duos in the United States. Their song "I Don't Want to Talk About It" was included in the soundtrack of the Oscar-winning film *Philadelphia*. According to Epic Records executives, their sixth and latest album, *Swamp Ophelia*, went platinum before it hit the stores. The Girls have just completed work on a new film, *Boys on the Side*, by veteran director Herbert Ross. Due out next spring, the film focuses on AIDS and homophobia, and features Whoopi Goldberg, Drew Barrymore and Mary-Louise Parker. The Girls have always had a



strong lesbian following, and that audience rejoiced last year when they both came out publicly, joining the ranks forged by other pop/rock stars like k.d. lang and Melissa Etheridge. During their recent European tour, Amy Ray spoke with me about the tour, *Swamp Ophelia*, the strong political nature of the Girls' music, their commitment to political issues and, of course, about the fallout since they came out. Ray is the duo's spokesperson. She has a deep, throaty voice and forthright manner that matches her slightly butch, good looks and her Georgian roots come through in her light Southern accent.



**Victoria A. Brownworth:** The new album seems different from your other work. Is this a new sound for the Indigo Girls? You've got some interesting people on the album here with you, like Jane Siberry.

**Amy Ray:** Yeah, Jane Siberry was someone whom we really admired. Her voice was more like an instrument. We really wanted that sound on the album; we really like working with her. The album's kind of a new direction, but we're still strong on a lot of the same points. Emily feels that this album is a huge step in the general progression of her songwriting and as an Indigo Girl.

**VAB:** Some of your songs on this album are very political, like "This Train." Not only do you talk overtly about gays in relation to the Holocaust, but you talk about the Holocaust in and of itself. Not a lot of songwriters are doing that. How is the song being received?

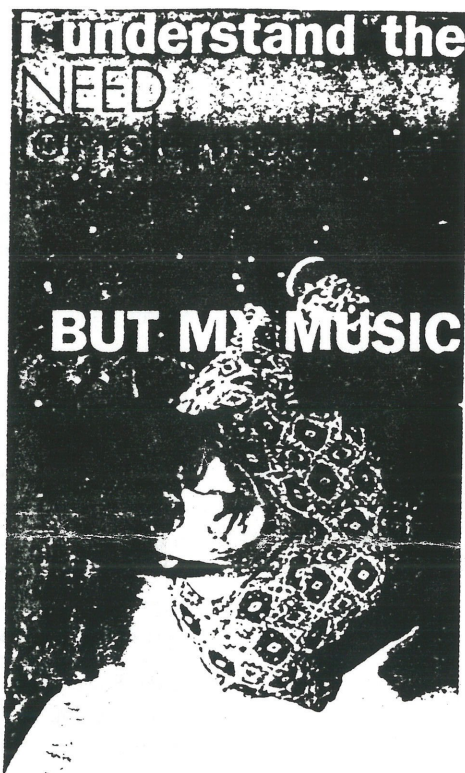
**AR:** Very positively. I went to the Holocaust Museum and it really affected me. There's a lot now that's being uncovered about the homosexual experience of the Holocaust and how it affected those survivors. At the Museum it's made very clear that although Jews were by far the main victims of the Holocaust, there were many others, too. I really need to write about these feelings. I wanted to talk about human nature; I didn't want to lay blame.

**VAB:** Is the audience over there responding to these songs? How is the tour going?

**AR:** It's been a real jumping-off place for conversations, like with the German press. You'd think it would be really controversial, but it hasn't been; it's been really interesting. We've been over here [Europe and the U.K.] five times, but we're very small over here. We're not well known but we play to capacity. It's going well.

**VAB:** Do you like playing to small crowds, or would you prefer doing Wembley Stadium [in London]?

**AR:** [laughing] No, we're not waiting to do Wembley Stadium. I mean, honestly we prefer smaller places because of the intimacy, and you know music — the sharing of it — is more important than just the performance, and I feel that when we play the really large places, we feel so distant. In America it's different when you play a big place, because the crowds make it more intimate; they come up



and dance and stuff. They're a little more reserved here, so it's harder.

**VAB:** How did you end up in *Boys on the Side*?

**AR:** The director really liked our music and decided to put us in the movie. We play ourselves in this movie. We're just a band that plays in a local bar that Whoopi and her friends hang out at. We play four or five Indigo Girls songs, and then we back Whoopi up on some of her songs. She recorded some cool stuff like "Walk on the Wild Side." We're the colored girls that go "do-do-do" in the background.

**VAB:** Indigo-colored?

**AR:** [Laughs.] Yeah. She said to me, "You are colored." She's great.

**VAB:** This is a pretty political movie, though, isn't it?

**AR:** Yeah, it is: It deals with homosexuality. [In the movie] Whoopi's gay and she's obviously black, and Drew Barrymore is running away from a husband that beat her up. And Mary-Louise Parker is like a very straight, sort of middle-class, very naive woman who has AIDS. So they deal with racial issues, homophobia, AIDS prejudice, basically a lot of feminist-type issues, and they don't really know each other very well,

so you see the growing-up experience and all the dealings that happen between them. It's a very honest movie. But you know when you're making a film you never know what's going to happen; you don't know if they're going to try to hide some of the gay stuff for the Hollywood thing, or if they're going to try to gloss over it, or if they're going to be as direct as the script is. So we just hope it's going to be as true to the script as it seemed like it was going to be.

**VAB:** Epic told me you're interested in doing more movies.

**AR:** Emily is interested in doing more film work. We always have our separate things going, but that won't take us in different directions. I know she wants to write more for films and probably be in them, too. I'm not so attached to the Hollywood-type film; I'm much more into the avant-garde and foreign films. I think the limits put on Hollywood are major, as far as what they can and can't do. So I think I'd be frustrated with that. Also, I'm not as good at writing for a particular thing as Emily is. It's not calling my name as loudly as it is Emily's.

**VAB:** Did you feel any trepidation about doing the film? Herbert Ross is a fine director and has tackled other social and feminist issues.

**AR:** Herb Ross is such a good director and so well respected, and, like you said, he's always managed to make really good, woman-centered films in spite of Hollywood. He's managed to stretch the boundaries of Hollywood. So, I had no trepidations about that. And the script was really great, and I felt like if Whoopi Goldberg was going to be in something, it was going to be good. I think she's someone who delves into issues in a very subtle way. I felt the way they handled the issues was really good. And after I read the script I was like, "This is really good." I don't think it ever occurred to us not to do it; I think we thought it was a great opportunity.

**VAB:** *Swamp Ophelia* is the first album you've recorded in Nashville. How was that experience? k.d. lang seemed to have a really hard time in Nashville as a lesbian and as a songwriter. Was that your experience?

**AR:** It was a great experience. There's a really new, hip scene there, different from



associated with anything political, especially a charged issue like choice.

**AR:** There's a backlash, too. There are people who are just tired of doing benefits; they just want to play their music. Some people are scared to stand up for things, too. I mean you're not going to get Wynonna Judd to do a pro-choice benefit, because a big country performer is going to lose a lot of [her] audience by doing something like this. It's not right, but it happens.

**VAB:** Greenpeace is mentioned in the liner notes of your album. Is this one of your special interests?

**AR:** Greenpeace is very well organized and they do really good things with their money. They go on the road with us, travel in our bus and we feed them; in return they educate people locally. We've done this for four years.

**VAB:** So, does this political bent mean that you're going to continue to be outspoken on the whole gay rights issue?

**AR:** I personally have always been outspoken. Emily's gone through periods where she hasn't been. [Laughs.] I'm an outspoken person. And it's [being a lesbian] the way I live, so I'll always talk about it. I don't consider myself to be a spokesperson. I understand the need for role models, but my music comes first in my life. And in my personal life gay activism comes before a lot of other things. But in my musical existence, my music comes first. I'm never going to be put down, I'm never going to be silent on something like this.

**VAB:** A lot of performers haven't been willing to either speak out on this issue or be open about their own experience, however.

**AR:** Well, I think that part of that is because once you start talking about gay issues, people stop listening to your songs. They go, "Let's talk about gay issues instead of talking about music." Part of it is not wanting that to be the whole focus. For some people that's their journey in life. And for other people that's a focus that they maintain in their personal life and they do a lot of work for gay rights, but they want to be a musician outside of that, too. And for me, I don't know how you can do it separately. I feel your life merges at some point and you have to stand up for yourself; if anything is ever going to be accomplished, you are going to have to do it yourself.

the country scene. I had lived there for a year before and it was really terrible. There was a lot of prejudice. But that city goes through phases. This time when we went back, there was more of a bohemian perspective. But you're never going to get rid of what k.d. doesn't like, which is the cliques and the really paranoid atmosphere. You get caught up in that. There are just so many songwriters, so many musicians.

**VAB:** It seems that there's a lot of political stuff connected to your music, things that many performers have shied away from, like doing benefits for choice and other issues. How important is that kind of political statement to you and to your music?

**AR:** I think it's not important to our music. I mean, our writing a song isn't depending on our doing a benefit. The political thing — that's just an extension of ourselves. We do it because it's important to us. We do benefits for certain organizations because we feel strongly about that particular issue. In our personal lives we're active and this is our way of being involved, because this is what we have time to do. We don't have time to do long-term projects like be in the Peace Corps. If we believe in an issue, we don't think twice about standing up for it.

**VAB:** More and more performers are moving away from that, being afraid of being



Taken from B Side, December 94/January 95:



# indigo girls

**Tell me, how would you pigeonhole the Indigo Girls? Folkies? Womyns' music? Relaxation for the Birkenstocks and PC crowd after a hard day of bringing down the system?**

My opinions came within that general range, at least until I heard their latest, *Swamp Ophelia*, which, while it might have a toe left in the folk camp, showcases songwriting and performances which have moved far beyond that. From there I took a listen to their back catalog and was pleasantly surprised. There's far more to the Indigo Girls than *Closer to Fine* and *Kid Fears*, and there always has been. So, when the chance came to talk to Amy Ray, one half of the band, I was glad to take it.

Just back from Europe, and plunging straight into a long North American tour, Amy sounds tired. It's one of those eat on the run days, preparing for a show, trying to squeeze in interviews...or maybe that's just a typical day for the Girls.

Amy and partner Emily Saliers have been friends since grade school, playing partners since high school. Oddly, they write separately—their only attempt to collaborate was an abject failure.

"I would probably never use half the words Emily uses—they're not even in my vocabulary! We respect each other's writing, and

that's why it works. We're happy with the separate styles. In the beginning both of us were compromising so much that the records were very folk and a narrow band of acoustic music. We were keeping each other safe. These days we compromise less, which is why the music has changed so much. Now I have no qualms about telling Emily, 'I want this song to be *this* way, and vice versa.'"

The two of them were playing solo before they ever joined up.

"I don't know what happened. I don't remember. I think we just decided to have some fun and sing together and it worked. I wasn't much of a harmony singer at the time, I pretty much stuck to the melody, but I think the blend was there. We had a good time, and we wanted to do the same covers—Neil Young, Elton John, James Taylor, a lot of the coffeehouse songs."

In the fourteen years since then, a great deal has changed. They play sell-out concerts, their records go gold and platinum. Even their audience has changed somewhat.

"Our initial fans were college kids and women," Amy remembers. "Now there's a lot more men, a lot more straight men and straight women are coming out, too. I appreciate the support from every spectrum."

Of course, the Indigo Girls have that politically correct reputation, and it's something Amy feels strongly about.

**text > chris townend • photo > bob berg**



"A lot of women feel strongly about sexism, lesbians and straight women, too. There aren't that many performers whose music isn't fraught with sexism and that conditioned thing of being condescending to women. I don't think it's always a malicious move. I just think it's going to take us a long time to get away from it. Kurt Cobain impressed me as one of the few who was strong enough to stand up and speak out. You could say there are a lot of people who are politically correct, but whether they're willing to put it on the line, I'm not sure. And politically correct is a relative term—it can still be rebellious. The Gang of Four was about as PC you can get and they were *extremely* rebellious. When I talk about politically correct, I'm not talking about the flower child stuff. I see a lot of compromise with the system, even in rock'n'roll. People do what they think they *should* do, they wear what they think they *should* wear. As soon as it's not trendy they stop doing benefits. There aren't many people who stand outside that."

The idea of compromise is one that comes up often in the interview, and is obviously something that stands close to Amy's heart. She even has her own independent record label, Daemon, to enable her to work outside the system, without compromise.

"It's a selfish thing, really," she admits. "I love the world of underground music and the way of doing things. That's where my heart is. It needs to be nurtured because otherwise it could easily get lost in the shuffle of money. For me it's an opportunity to vent my frustrations and help people put records out. If we ever make money—and I don't know if it'll ever happen—I'm going to start a fund for independent film, because that's another thing I'm interested in supporting, and there's a need for money in that area. Daemon's truly a non-profit. It had some rough moments last year, but we're pulling out of the dark. It will continue. It's a hit or miss thing, because when I have someone come on the label they do what *they* want, so sometimes their strongest points don't come out. I have to be very careful not to say anything, to hold back and let people be free, which is the whole purpose of the label."

And one of the label's signings, Lay Quiet Awhile, opened for the Girls on their recent English dates. On this tour—both in Europe and over here—Amy and Emily are playing just as a duo, without a backing band.

"It's a deliberate return to basics for a while. We'll tour with the band later on this year. We like to mix it up. We toured with the band a lot last year—a *lot*—and we just wanted to start this year on our own, just to get a feel for everything."

The record that's causing the tour, *Swamp Ophelia*, is probably the most sophisticated, stylistically varied record of their career, bringing in not only hard hitting session musicians, but sympathetic guests like The Roches, Lisa Germano and Jane Siberry.

"I think some of it is that we felt more

comfortable in the studio. This is the second record with the same producer [Peter Collins], so we had the formalities out of the way, and we could immediately immerse ourselves in the different musicians we'd use. We got lucky on this record. We picked a bunch of players who brought in a different side of things, and some of the songs dealt with things that could bring in different musical influences. I think we've always been influenced by all styles of music, but as far as the studio goes, we didn't have the time or the money before to put some of those other ideas down. Plus, I was being more influenced by the alternative world, but I wasn't using it in the realm of the Indigo Girls. We grew up on that scene, playing alternative clubs because the folk clubs weren't open minded enough for us and what we wanted to do. The spirit was always there, but now it's really emerging musically."

On 'Touch Me Fall' the song begins as a ballad then revs up into a three-chord rocker that'll make you swear you're listening to a cover of 'Won't Get Fooled Again.'

"It was a little deliberate, tongue-in-cheek-, bow down to the Who type of thing," Amy admits. "When I was writing it and it moved from one section to another I didn't think about it. Then when I was playing it, I went, 'We should really kind of muck this up a bit.'"

And while that playfulness is there, the record is often serious, never more so than in 'This Train (Revised),' which was prompted by Amy's visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington, D.C., and its portrayal of the victims—the Jews, of course, but also the Gypsies and the homosexuals.

"That was important to me. At the Museum it's made very clear that although Jews were by far the main victims of the Holocaust, there were many others too."

For now, Amy is very positive about things—the band, the tour, the future.

"Our career's going well. I'm satisfied with it. I don't feel the need to get bigger than we are. I don't feel ambitious about radio play. I don't want to shove it down peoples' throats. We have a unique position of not being so big that we can't walk down the street but being big enough to have all the amenities at our fingertips. So we're lucky. But we're still part of that major label thing and sometime you have to make a decision whether you want to be part of it—whether you want to change the system from the inside or not. For me, we'll keep setting an example of non-compromise—do things our own way, be more creative rather than spend more money, and, at some point, if we feel it's not working, we'll go off on our own journey. But right now I feel good about it."

And that's the state of play. But you get the sense that Amy means it, and the Indigo Girls could easily turn their backs and walk away. Commitment....it's a big word, in more ways than one, but the Indigo Girls have it. And I'm pleased someone does. **B**



From The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, December 2, 1994:

# Newcomers to big names, singers find kinship, loyal following in clubs

**Editor's Note:** *It would be futile to try to capture Atlanta's acoustic music landscape in one short newspaper article — a book would be more fitting. Instead, here's a look at a fairly typical weekend at two of its Decatur epicenters: a club called Eddie's Attic and a record store called Rainy Day Records. We'll spend most of the time with three representative performers at various stages in their careers — Michelle Penn is just starting out, Matthew Kahler is in the middle and Shawn Mullins is on the cusp of major-label breakthrough. Their stories, though individualistic, offer a telling glimpse into a scene that's as rich as it is varied.*

**By Bob Townsend**

FOR THE JOURNAL-CONSTITUTION

It's a little past 7 on a Friday night at Eddie's Attic, and not a single soul is talking.

Nor smoking. A good portion of the 100 or so people in this rough-hewn room aren't even drinking anything stronger than coffee. Which, to the uninitiated, can seem quite strange, because, after all, this is a bar.

As ground zero for Atlanta's booming acoustic music scene, this second-floor lounge is filled with people who have come to listen. Right now, they're focused on Shawn Mullins, a 26-year-old singer-songwriter who's sharing a tale from his past, while imbuing the present with his own peculiar take on the world.

Whoops mixed with exuberant applause ricochet off the walls behind the corner stage as he ends the first song. He smoothes his shoulder-length blond hair back and grabs a beat-up black guitar.

"How many of you are underage, but you smoke?" he asks. A few hands shoot up. "Because I was just thinking," Mullins says, "it must be a drag. You finally get into Eddie's, but now you can't have a cigarette."

The mix of college and high school students, urban professionals and neighborhood regulars trying this new no-smoking, all-ages experiment have a good laugh. And then they settle back in silence again, as Mullins begins to pick out another tune.

At the back of the room, Eddie Owen — the man who is, for all intents and purposes, Eddie's Attic — stands in the sound booth, sipping a beer.

Later, he describes his original goal in remaking the former Picasso's Performance Cafe into a shrine to singer-songwriters. "I wanted to create a room that could be large enough to do a regional or a national act but intimate enough so that if you saw that person, you would think, 'My God, I'm sitting right at his feet and this is the best show I've ever seen in my life.'"

If this picture seems idyllic, be assured that for the most part, it really is. This night isn't necessarily typical, but it's very true. Like the slice-of-life dramas that these performers try so hard to render, each of the following little snapshots tells another part of a much bigger story.

## Another folk singer?

"It's no secret," says Mullins, who grew up in and still lives in Decatur when he's not touring. "I was a geek in high school. I was also a paratrooper in the Army. Now *that* really blows people's minds."

Perched in a broom-closet-size office behind the bar, Mullins has a couple of hours to kill before the 11 o'clock show, where, he says smirking, he'll be playing for the smokers and drinkers.

Which brings us to the barbs so often aimed at Atlanta's decidedly mild-mannered and close-knit acoustic music community. "It's not really as prudish as people in the rock scene seem to think it is," he says, somewhat defensively. "And we don't all sound alike."

In his own way, he's responding to a lyric by the alternative rock band Cracker. "What the world needs now is another folk singer. . . . Like I need a hole in the head," is how the song that became a left-of-the-dial radio anthem goes. "Yeah, and what the world needs is another grunge band," Mullins replies with mock seriousness.

Lately, the jokes about fey singer-songwriters have become a little easier for Mullins to deflect — at least three major record labels have been courting him on the strength of his well-received independent CD, "Big Blue Sky" (Sullivan Music). It also doesn't hurt that, in a truly ironic twist of fate, he recently opened for Cracker when the band decided to tour unplugged.

"I've been unplugged from the beginning," says Mullins, who's played all over the United States for the past six years. Last July, though, he grabbed what is perhaps the most coveted spot in the acoustic kingdom: opening a show for the Indigo Girls.

## Amy and Emily and Eddie

"It would be impossible to underestimate the influence of the Indigo Girls," Eddie Owen says. "Because of them, every acoustic artist wants to play Atlanta." And, he says, that makes deciding who to book "the absolute hardest part" of his job.



The 39-year-old Georgia State grad and longtime Decatur resident only opened Eddie's Attic 2½ years ago, but he'd been on the scene since the early '80s, when he waited tables part time at Trackside Tavern. He got his start in clubland booking the kind of music he favored at the Decatur landmark — including a fledgling duo called Amy and Emily.

The Indigo Girls, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers, are now — except for rare special appearances — way too big to play in Eddie's 225-seat Attic. But Owen, who occasionally hops onstage to sing and pitches himself somewhere between patron saint and coach, has no trouble filling the club's monthly calendar.

In addition to rising national stars such as Iris DeMent, Jeff Buckley and David Wilcox, the Attic continues to be a favored venue for Atlanta-spawned performers with major-label recordings — such as Pierce Pettis, Billy Pilgrim (a.k.a. Andrew Hyra and Kristian Bush) and Kristen Hall.

"Sometimes I wonder what the hell I'm trying to do," Owen says. "To think I could ever make any money by having a folk club. But I love it and think it's just a matter of time before this scene mushrooms. I think there's already been a huge resurgence in the past five or six years."

Weekly open-mike nights have been Eddie's entree to even younger performers such as twins Evan and Jaron (formerly known as Durable Phig Leaf) and dozens of others. "I could do nothing but local artists seven nights a week," Owen says. "And pretty much promise a good show every night."

James Scavo, a 43-year-old attorney who works in Buckhead and lives in Sandy Springs, says many performers at Eddie's remind him of the folk musicians he grew up listening to. He and his wife, Dana, both big fans of James Taylor and Shawn Colvin, say they especially appreciate Eddie's early shows.

"We have three sons, and with my law practice the days are pretty full of responsibilities," Scavo says. "So we're not at the point [where] staying out until 1 in the morning is real appealing. And it's smoke-free, which is great. We go over and eat dinner at 6, by 7 the music starts and we're home by 9 or so."

## Locals only?

Michelle Penn, 26, was drawn to Atlanta from Detroit by the acoustic scene's reputation as a cozy place to hatch a career. Sure, it's a tough way to make a living, but this community seems to encourage cooperation as much as competition.

"I've been here a little over a year, and it's amazing how many people have helped me," she says. "What you see onstage is what you get offstage."

Alternately intense and impish, Penn has been supporting herself by teaching guitar in a Stockbridge music store and is waiting for her first album to be delivered "any day now."

Steve Craig, a deejay at WNNX-FM (99.7), who hosts the Sunday-morning show "Locals Only," sees the influx of talent on a weekly basis. "The U-Hauls are crossing the borders everyday," he says.

"They see the support and the excitement and camaraderie that's here — Atlanta is perceived as the acoustic mecca of the Southeast. This is where the Indigo Girls had their start, and they are heroes to a lot of people."

Every week Craig has a different musician in the studio to chat and play a few songs live. Last weekend, Penn was there to preview her album ("Running From the Seasons," on her own Pissy Missy imprint) and plug Saturday's release-party performance at Eddie's.

"Going home for Christmas will be different this year," says Penn, who only recently told her family what she *really* does in Atlanta. "They thought I moved down here to be a marketing manager. But I'll be giving them my CD as a present and saying, 'Hey, I made it myself.'"

## Rainy Day dreams

"I made it myself" is the credo for much of the cottage industry that is independent music. And that is perhaps even more true in the case of acoustic artists who often distribute their own albums.

On an appropriately drizzly Saturday morning at Rainy Day Records — the small Toco Hills shop that has made local music its forte and expanded its sales arm over the Internet — 44-year-old store owner Perry Thompson is showing off his latest project. "We've got a site on the Worldwide Web — the commercial part of the Internet," he says with delight. He pushes a key on the laptop computer next to the cash register and the cloud-bordered cover of Shawn Mullins' "Big Blue Sky" album appears.

Once a computer programmer at Georgia State, Thompson is showing singer Matthew Kahler what a "home page" on the Web will look like and punches another key to call up the cover of Kahler's album "My Own Medicine" (Dreamcatcher).

Kahler, 35, doesn't even wince anymore at being told he sounds just like James Taylor. After trying his hand at stand-up comedy and acting in Los Angeles in the late '80s, the Albany, Ga., native decided the solo music life suited him better and moved to Atlanta in 1991.

Now, just three years later, Kahler and Mullins (who are good friends) often are described as "the twin pillars of Eddie's Attic." And Kahler has come to understand why, as Mullins says, "You have to be an artist, first and foremost, but you also have to know what you're doing with your money."

"Everybody says the same thing in the beginning," Kahler says. "I don't like the business end. I don't understand it and I'm not going to worry about it." But once you start investing in CDs — making them and selling them — you have to learn about it." But there's always someone who can help you, he adds.

"It's very hard to become successful commercially with a guitar and a catchy song," says 99X's Craig. "It tends to come across to most radio listeners as a little on the boring side. . . . The thing that always comes up [about Atlanta's scene] is that everybody plays on everybody else's album. That shows the close-knit aspect of the scene, but it's also kind of a running joke."

Kahler laughs at the idea that he and his acoustic peers are boringly wholesome and oddly incestuous at the same time.

"You say we all sound alike. If you're on the inside, you see how it's different. From the outside, looking in on rock, it's all big guitar chords and drums. And the people I know — Gerard McHugh, Michelle Penn, Shawn Mullins, David Patterson — are nice people. We hug each other. . . . You really appreciate Atlanta when you go somewhere else. Nobody knows who you are and nobody is really listening."



# WHO'S WHO

*among the singers,  
strummers in town*

The Indigo Girls often are seen as the alpha and omega of the Atlanta acoustic scene. But anyone who got turned on to "Unplugged" music via MTV — or even as early as their 1989 hit, "Closer to Fine" — should know there were singers and songwriters here before Amy and Emily. And open-mike nights at now-defunct bars such as the Pub, the White Dot and the Dugout gave them their start.



**Pierce Pettis**

Says Eddie's Attic owner Eddie Owen, who hosts an open-mike night on Mondays at his Decatur club: "It would be a gross understatement not to cite the Indigo Girls, though I'm sure they get sick of hearing it. Anytime anyone asks them, the first thing they say is, 'Yeah, but Dede Vogt and Caroline Aiken brought us up onstage at the Pub, or we would have never been up there.'"

Here's a glimpse at the rest of Atlanta's acoustic players:



**Caroline Aiken**



**Matthew Kahler**

► **First generation.** Caroline Aiken: Her aching sincere songs are the genuine article; Rache Alpert: Mixes old-style folk tunes with cutting humor; Angela Motter: Razor-edged, redemptive folk; Kodac Harrison: Veteran folk-rock-er with deep Georgia roots; Dede Vogt: Producer/multi-instrumentalist whose latest project is "Cowboy Envy."

► **Rising stars.** Kristen Hall: Haunting melodies, passionate lyrics; Billy Pilgrim: Popular duo hot from major-label debut.

► **Once and future stars.** Michelle Malone: Tough but tender singer-guitarist bridges folk and rock; Pierce Pettis: Others may get more hype. He just keeps telling stories in the most personal and truthful terms he can.

► **Generation next** (in addition to Matthew Kahler, Shawn Mullins and Michelle Penn). Wendy Bucklew: Honey-coated melodies mask intense introspection; Don Conoscenti: Moved to Virginia but will continue to play Eddie's; Evan and Jaron: Adorable acoustic moppets reportedly have a major-label mojo workin'; Natalie Farr: Somber songs, deliberate delivery (latest CD is "In Your Sleep"); Gerard McHugh: Just-released "Yard Sale" and a "Superstar" Pilate drew raves; Millan and Kenzie: Spiritual sentiment laces their tunes.



**Dede Vogt**

► **Master of ceremonies:** Uncle Mark Reynolds: Half of the evangelically intense duo Ashley and Mark, this ubiquitous scenerter is also the doorman at Eddie's.

**This weekend's shows**  
(See Page 6 for more)

► **Benefit for Georgia Center for Children.** 8:30 tonight. Eddie's Attic. \$12 advance; \$15 door. Featuring 30-minute sets by Kristen Hall, Michelle Malone, Shawn Mullins, Matthew Kahler, Wendy Bucklew, Gary Frenay and Uncle Mark Reynolds. 515-B N. McDonough St., Decatur. 377-4976.

► **Michelle Penn.** 9 p.m. Saturday. Album-release party. Eddie's Attic.

► **Songwriters Night.** 9 p.m. Sunday. Matthew Kahler, Mark Reynolds, Neil Fagen and Barbara Carter. Eddie's Attic.

— Bob Townsend  
and Doug Hamilton



**Indigo Girls**  
**Saturday**  
**December 3, 1994**  
**The Spectrum**  
**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

**Set List:**

Fugitive  
Wood Song  
Dead Man's Hill  
Galileo  
Reunion  
Power Of Two  
Center Stage  
Least Complicated  
Nashville  
Language Or The Kiss  
The Train (Revised)  
Mystery  
Pushin' The Needle Too Far  
Crazy Game  
Chickenman  
Virginia Woolf

**Encores:**

Midnight Train To Georgia  
Touch Me Fall  
Closer To Fine

Sue Waldner  
Camp Hill, Pennsylvania



**Indigo Girls  
Saturday  
December 3, 1994  
The Spectrum  
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

Although my latest Indigo Girls' concert was as awesome as usual, it was a very different experience for me. First of all, the concert was at the Spectrum in Philadelphia, PA which holds *thousands* of people - not quite the smaller venues which I had become accustomed to seeing Amy and Emily play in. Second, the only tickets that I could get were two rows away from New Jersey in the second balcony - again, not quite the same as two rows away from the stage!

During the opening band - K's Choice, a band that the IG's played with on their European Tour, who, incidentally was very good - I made the appropriate adjustments on my binoculars.

After a rather long intermission, Amy and Emily finally took the stage amidst thundering screams and applause from the immediate audience. They were playing with their band (Sara Lee, Jerry Marotta, & Jane Scarpentoni) which was different from the concerts I had seen in June. Both Amy and Emily seemed to be extremely chatty giving long introductions and explanations to their songs. They also gave the audience numerous chances to sing along. Emily even instructed us which part we were to sing on "Least Complicated" (the Na Na part). Amy was in fine firm adding an interesting musical introduction to "This Train", interrupting "Chickenman" for an extended narration on the meaning of the song, and ad libbing the ending of "Touch Me Fall".

In the middle of the concert one of the fans jumped up on to stage and managed to embrace both Amy and Emily before the security guards motioned for her to jump down. Amy joked with the girl telling her she had to sing if she was going to be on stage, and Emily warned her to be careful as she jumped off the stage. Both IG's commented on what a "civil fan" show was!!! Jeez....

As the concert drew to a close, I realized that even though I was truly in nose-bleed heaven, the Indigo Girls managed to mesmerize me with their music. It certainly wasn't the same as being able to see them sweat, or being able to have to opportunity to shake their hands at the concert's end, but it was still an experience not to be missed.

Sue Waldner  
Camp Hill, PA



From The Pink Paper, December 9, 1994:

*The Indigo Girls are one of America's most underrated groups.  
Jane Cornwell met them at the end of their recent tour*

# A colour purple.

**One half** of the Grammy-award winning Indigo Girls, Amy Ray lives with a menagerie of ducks, dogs and cats in the middle of some woods near Atlanta. She says she relates better to her animals than to people, and even credits them on the sleeve of *Swamp Ophelia*, the duo's latest and highest-charting release to date. Currently approaching sales of one million in the US, the Indigo Girls have recently completed an extensive British tour which has broadened their fan base and won them rave reviews.

Amy and partner Emily Saliers are songsmiths extraordinaire, crafting a mostly acoustic sound which veers between balladry and chaotic orchestration. Their back catalogue stretches over nine years and is peppered with guesting luminaries such as Joan Baez, Jane Siberry, Michael Stipe and Jackson Browne; all lending resonance to the pair's guitar-fired genre.

Amy says that "Galileo" ("Galileo's head was on the block, the crime was looking up the truth") from the acclaimed *Rites of Passage* album is their most requested song.

The Indigo Girls are a rare breed of rock and roller: chart toppers who are out-lesbians as well as environmentally aware political activists who continue to be amazed by their own success. I often play an Indigo Girls record when I'm feeling pre-menstrual ("Oh no," laughs Ray, "that's the worst time!"), as their bitter-sweet harmonies envelop me in a cloak of well-being and quell any murderous inclinations.

Ray says the title of the latest was so-called "because we thought it reflected the sensibilities of the album - a combination of perversion and beauty." The main difference between the song-writing "is

that Emily's very narrative and focuses on a specific point, whereas I'm quite abstract and go all over the place. She believes it to be pretty much the same in real life.

Amy Ray wrote "Fugitive", which incorporates African drums, horns, cellos, trumpets and chimes, and includes the

*"I get as much out of seeing a  
black civil rights speaker as I do  
out of a lesbian activist."*

line: "we must learn to respect what we don't understand. It's sort of about my relationship," she explains. "I've been with the same woman for seven years - she's in this profession too - and we've grown up together through all this mess. It's about the way we've dealt



with things. That line is saying that every time you think you've got it hard, you've got to realise how fortunate you are. And if you respect people they'll respect you back."

Respect is a big theme for the Indigo Girls, who number gay rights, AIDS awareness, Native American Indians and

concern for the planet amongst their causes. Amy says that "our songs aren't that political in themselves, but politics takes over our personal lives." Greenpeace tour with them in the States, lobbying in concert hall foyers and informing audiences about different taskforce strategies. Emily Saliers is the main investor for the Common Pond - a store in Atlanta which sells only environmentally sound products.

A recent benefit was staged for the Sexual Minority Youth League in Washington DC, "for gay kids who have run away from home. It helps them deal with any suicidal thoughts and places them in schools and jobs." Twenty benefit gigs for Native Americans will take place next May.

They also star in the Herbert Ross movie *Boys on the Side*, which tackles issues of homophobia, racism and AIDS and is due for British release next year. "It's about three women who end up going across the country together for different reasons," says Ray. "One's gay (Whoopi Goldberg), one has AIDS (Mary Louise Parker) and one (Drew Barrymore)

is running from her abusive husband. We're the house band in a bar where Whoopi ends up singing."

She puts the Indigo Girls' phenomenal popularity down to the fact that "our fans are really loyal and spread the word. We're also very honest and try to be as sincere as possible; I think people appreciate that." Though acknowledging that she never feels separated from her lesbian status, she's hesitant about being cast as a role model: "I'm extremely flawed, so I don't want anybody to see people achieving things in their own right and not compromising. I get as much out of seeing a black civil rights speaker as I do out of a lesbian activist."

Her inspirations range from Jimmy Carter ("who was honest in a world where no-one else is") to Neil Young ("because he does what he does") and close friend Joan Baez.

"Joan has been a major figure for me politically, and has given me a lot of strength in moments where I didn't have much. She's been a big help when I've occasionally been ambivalent about my own pacifism." Amy Ray also owns Daemon Records where, be it punk or acoustic, "good songwriting" is the main criteria.

One of the latter's signings, a hard-edged folk singer called Danielle Howle, supported the duo in Britain. The tour went well, says Amy, who prefers small clubs to larger venues. "I like their sweaty intimacy. To me, that's rock and roll."

Were there any hiccups? "Well, I did have an attack of them when I walked on stage in Leeds. How did you know?"

● *Swamp Ophelia is out now on Epic Records.*



From The Union-News, December 12, 1994:

# Indigo's new gig falls flat

By KEVIN O'HARE

AMHERST — One of the raps against the Indigo Girls used to be too much of their material sounded too much alike.

## REVIEW

But during the past couple of years, the fiery folk rock duo from Georgia has taken off in some different directions. Refreshing? Surprisingly, no. In fact, it kind of makes one long for the days of the same old, same old.

Indigos Emily Saliers and Amy Ray brought their current tour to the friendly confines of the Mullins Center at the University of Massachusetts Friday night, playing to a fiercely devoted crowd, estimated at approximately 4,000. Longtime faves in the Valley, the duo is pushing its latest album, "Swamp Ophelia," an aptly titled disc that's darker and drearier than anything the Indigos have previously recorded.

Friday's 20-song, nearly two-hour set was dominated by tracks from "Ophelia." While some benefited from live interpretations, many fell flat, and the show nearly crumbled completely three-quarters of the way through.

Instead of capitalizing on their shimmering harmonies and richly melodic fare, Saliers and Ray got bogged down in long, stark, electric tracks like "Touch Me Fall," and the well-intentioned but ineffective "This Train." They even included a cover of Neil



TUNED IN — The Indigo Girls played Friday night at the Mullins Center in Amherst.

Young's "Cortez the Killer," featuring Ray thrashing away on guitar, repeatedly screaming "What a killer, what a killer."

Trouble is, she's not much of a guitarist, and her voice is an acquired taste at best. In contrast, Saliers is a first-rate talent, whose soaring vocals and rippling guitar work powered songs such as "Let it Be Me," "Love's Recovery," "Power of Two" and an especially sizzling version of "Joking." The two singers are surprisingly dissimilar, which actually may be the twist that's helped key their success all these years.

They brought a fine band with them, powered by veteran studio drum whiz Jerry Marotta (who even played a bit of sax), as well as bassist Sara Lee and cellist Jane Scarpantoni. Marotta was magnificent throughout the evening, most notably on the set-opening "Fugitive" and spirited take of "Reunion." Other high-

lights of the concert included "Least Complicated," "Galileo" and the inevitable final encore "Closer to Fine."

While it may not have been one of their best nights musically, there's no doubt the Indigo Girls have a lot of class, as could be seen by the way they treated their up-and-coming opening act, K's Choice. Headliners hardly ever come out on stage with their openers, but Ray and Saliers did, joining K's Choice for a torrid version of Neil Young's "Rockin' in the Free World."

It was a powerhouse ending to very impressive set by K's Choice. The group, which hails from Belgium, is led by the sister-brother duo of Sarah and Gert Bettens. Their evocative harmonies and sharp songwriting were impressively displayed on several selections from their U.S. debut "The Great Subconscious Club."



From The Springfield Advocate, December 15, 1994:

# Come Together

Indigo Girls' acoustic utopia at the Mullins

Pour a cup of chamomile tea and close your eyes—your heaven on earth awaits you. Such was the message at the Indigo Girls' December 9 show at Mullins Arena, where a crowd of several thousand mostly women were transported to that musical dream world Amy Ray and Emily Saliers have proved themselves so capable at constructing.

Not unlike Green Day, who worked similar magic with a Mullins crowd less than two weeks earlier, the Indigo Girls' music thrives on its own power to create a milieu for group transcendence: It's their belief that pop, or folk, songs can carry an audience beyond their differences and into a utopia born of the music that makes them a force not to be too easily dismissed.

"You always have one show on tour when your head is where it shouldn't be," exclaimed Ray about midway into the Girls' nearly two-hour set. Alluding to the evening's unexpected snowfall, the weather served as just another messy reminder of the material world for Ray, who wanted to be anywhere but.

That world has rarely made its way into the duo's songs. Unlike other so-called women-in-rock—Liz Phair, Juliana Hatfield, hell, even Suzanne Vega—the struggle that informs Ray and Saliers' music is not of the everyday, personal type but rather a collective struggle to locate ourselves in the spiritual world, or alternatively to invent our own. While it has gotten them pegged as overly precious New Age folkies, it has also made their music and message more accessible to a wider audience.

To be sure, few performers' music cuts across constituencies as much as Ray and Saliers' does. Although college-aged women were among the most visible in the crowd (with Doc Martins and the occasional facial piercing replacing the Birkenstocks and patchouli), the audience

also included older same-sex couples, Deadheads, alternative-looking teen girls, and fratboys, among others.

Set against a backdrop of purple and pink pastel lights that at times conjured the mild psychedelia of Fruitopia bottles, the duo harmonized about personal empowerment through group strength, while their acoustic soundscapes created a parallel world where those different factions of fans could stand side-by-side for a night and hear their favorite band, detached from the social forces that might keep them apart otherwise.

Perhaps the one reminder that things were still messy outside was opening act K's Choice's decision to have Ray and Saliers join them for the final song of their set, a cover of Neil Young's "Rockin' in the Free World," daddy grunge's dire ruminations on the divisions that still haunt our country. Unfortunately, the song seemed to lose its most deepest meanings divorced from its original context, being remade into a sing-along jam that provoked much celebration but little thought. Well, no one ever said utopia would be perfect.



ON THE HOME FRONT

# Atlanta's 'open arms' welcome Indigo Girls

By Miriam Longino  
STAFF WRITER

Eddie Owen — the Eddie of the hip Decatur club Eddie's Attic — remembers the first time he saw Indigo Girl Amy Ray. It was on the basketball court back in the early '80s, where the tomboyish teenager was elbowing her way through a pack of girls to score a win for the Decatur First Methodist Church team.

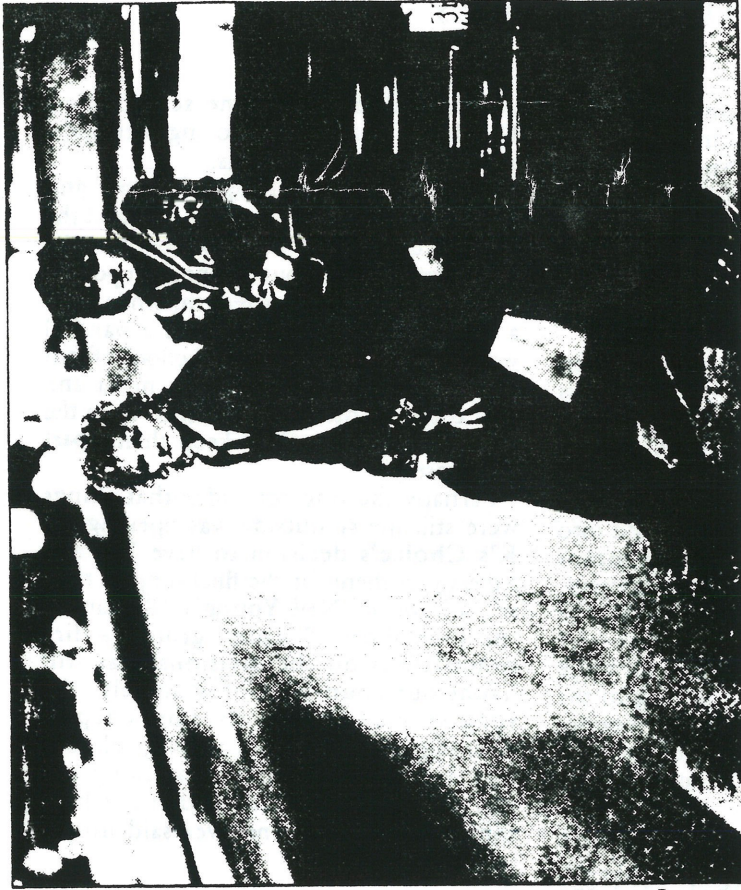
"Man, she was just all fire," Owen remembers. "She was exactly the same kind of athlete as she is a musician. I think Amy had a vision from the time she was 12 she was going to be a star. Amy just doesn't say no to herself, and I think that's the key to their [Indigo Girls] endurance."

Indigo Girls, Ray, 30, and Emily Saliers, 31, haven't just endured since Epic Records plucked them out of the obscurity of Emory area clubs and signed them to a record contract in 1988. They have become their own cottage industry — a nationally revered million-dollar enterprise headquartered in their modest hometown of Decatur.

Like Georgia bands REM and Arrested Development, they have cultivated a loyal, hard-core following of fans who listen to their records endlessly, hanging onto every word of their neo-folk sound and deeply professional lyrics.

Their latest CD, "Swamp Ophelia," approaches platinum status. And tonight they head their two Mack trucks and two buses home to Atlanta, where they open a three-night stint of homecoming concerts at Symphony Hall.

Observers say Amy Ray (left) and Emily Saliers rarely socialize but when they do come together to perform, everything gels. Tonight is the first of three sold-out shows at Symphony Hall.





grew to two, and, ultimately, to three sold-out nights.

"They wanted to book us in the Omni, and when we found out we said 'no way,'" she says. "We typically like to play smaller places because it's more intimate."

**The show** Indigo Girls bring to town this week may be rooted in the duo's strong desire for the audience to have a personal experience with their music. It's a dressed up version of their summer concert at Chastain, where only the two of them performed. This time they bring along a three-piece band and a mix of experimental instruments (from mandolins to a pennywhistle) that form the backbone of their expanded, lush sound on the "Swamp Ophelia" CD.

Though the Indigo Girls haven't traveled into Pink Floyd territory with lasers and inflatables, Ray and Saliers have splurged on artsy sets drawing from the Victorian drawing-room designs of their most recent album cover by Atlanta artist Michael Allen.

The show comes at the end of the duo's '94 tour, which has kept them on the road most of the year. Though their look has changed little since the days they roamed Little Five Points, Ray and Saliers both concede that their financial and creative success has eclipsed their wildest dreams.

"It probably has affected me in ways I don't realize," Ray says. "I try not to let the fame and money affect my motivations and deepest values. But it has allowed us to do things we couldn't do before. I've been able to have a record label [Daemon], which gives me inspiration."

**Perhaps the most amazing chapter** in the Indigo Girls' story is how unaffected Ray and Saliers seem to be. They both still live in Atlanta, and say they have never considered moving to the rock enclaves of the Hollywood Hills. You're not likely to see them dropping into trendy Buckhead restaurants in luxury cars or trying on custom-made clothes at Phipps either.

Ray lives in the "North Georgia" woods where she writes songs on her screened-in porch. (She refuses to reveal even the county since she moved there "for privacy" after people kept showing up at her Decatur apartment.)

Saliers prefers Atlanta, and owns a home in Decatur where she likes to make "lots of food with sauces" in her kitchen. That's the place she also writes songs (she penned "Power of Two" and "Least Complicated" over a cup of tea there).

The two women grew up together in middle-class neighborhoods around Market Square Mall, hanging out with friends from Shamrock High School, cruising Burger King, going to football games and "standing around Dipper Dans."

Though they have forged their careers, they lead separate lives. Observers say Ray and Saliers rarely socialize on or off the road. They write their songs individually — Ray, preferring the edgy sound of the alternative music scene, and Saliers taking on a more folkie sound. They even call separately for media interviews.

But neither desires to work without the other. They offer their music in polite turn-taking on their CDs and view themselves as a **lifelong team.**

**"People have changed their Christmas plans** just to stay for the show," Owen says. "There's definitely a buzz in the air about it."

On the road in Winston-Salem, N.C., Saliers and Ray both say they have mixed feelings about playing their hometown.

"It's my community, and I am very attached to Atlanta. It's like a big ol' pair of open arms," Saliers says. "I feel very nurtured there. But in a way we sometimes kind of feel like wallpaper. People are used to us being around, and being part of the Atlanta scene."

Ray agrees.

"It's a phenomenon I've seen happen with a lot of bands," she says. "I've seen bands come home after being out on the road for eight months and they'll get an apathetic reception. Most of the time ... we're made to feel really good when we come home. But I think, in general, people in Atlanta are kind of spoiled because there's such a great music scene and they're used to it."

Saliers says she was surprised when she saw the Atlanta date on the duo's tour schedule. Indigo Girls were not originally scheduled to play here on this tour, but one date



**Amy Ray**  
**Saturday**  
**December 31, 1994**  
**Rainy Day Records**  
**Atlanta, Georgia**

**Set List:**

Three Hits  
Lincoln Douglas  
Problem Child

**Notes:**

This was the Rainy Day Records New Year's Eve bash, which featured performances by Gerard McHugh, David Patterson, Millan & Kenzie, Michelle Penn, Kevin Lawson, Angie Aparo, Angie Munson, Kodac Harrison, Natalie Farr, Lift, Wendy Bucklew, Ride The Wood (Caroline Aikens new band), Mark Reynolds, Amy Ray (an unscheduled performance), Viva La Diva, Shawn Mullins, and Cree.

"Lincoln Douglas" is a Paul Simon cover which starts with "My name is Lincoln Douglas and this is my story...". "Problem Child" is a new Amy song, which includes lines like "don't sit down", "don't assume anything", and "go, go, go". Both songs were played during sound checks on the west coast tour last summer, and bits and pieces of "Problem Child" made their way into "Touch Me Fall" during the December east coast tour.