

lifeblood

the unofficial go-head journal

july 31, 1994

issue #27

LEAST COMPLICATED SINGLE RELEASED

With Swamp Ophelia the tour selling out shows across the country, and Swamp Ophelia the album selling at a very brisk pace, Epic has released "Least Complicated" backed with an acoustic version of "Dead Man's Hill" as a cassette single (34T 77607). It is believed that this is the first commercial single off the album, for although an edited version of "Touch Me Fall" was released to radio, there have been no reports of the song appearing in any other format in the United States. A video for "Touch Me Fall" appeared on VH-1 in early July, it featured footage of Amy and Emily playing their guitars outside in front of a large white wall with assorted mirrors hung on one side and also some claymation footage as well. "Touch Me Fall" has been released as a two fold digipak CD single in Australia (660444 2), with the same cover art as the U.S. promo single. It also contains "Dead Man's Hill" (acoustic), "Mystery" (acoustic), "I Don't Wanna Talk About It", and "Closer To Fine". "Least Complicated" has been released as a thin jewel case CD single in Europe (660340 2), with the same cover art as the "Touch Me Fall" CD (as well as "Touch Me Fall" on the spine). It also contains "Dead Man's Hill" (acoustic), "Mystery" (acoustic), and "Kid Fears". Surprisingly enough, one copy of each import CD single found their way into the Indigo Girls bin at the Best Buy store here in Plano, Texas for just \$8.88 each, so if there is a store near where you live you might want to check it out.

Printed on recycled paper



**Indigo Girls
Saturday
April 30, 1994
Earth Jam '94
Stone Mountain, Georgia**

What can I say about Earth Jam '94? With the star-studded line-up, the promise of an environmentally-friendly atmosphere and the underpriced ticket charge (read cheap!) a good time was guaranteed for all. Those who couldn't attend probably missed the show of the year.

All of the artists involved, even the lesser-known ones, kicked out amazing sets of music, highlighted with occasional appearances from Amy and Emily. A scorching version of "London Calling" was offered up from Viva La Diva, with the Girls helping out on electric guitar (Emily) and lead vocals (Amy, with a bit of help from her cheat notes). Kristen Hall (along with the aforementioned duo) blasted through Neil Young's "Southern Man". Throughout the show, we were fortunate enough to catch an occasional glimpse of Mary-Chapin Carpenter, or Nanci Griffith, and, of course, A & E listening with obvious delight to whichever artist happened to be up on the stage. It was sincerely heartening to find out that some of my favorite acts are liked by some of my other favorites.

As for the show, Viva La Diva was rocking - especially Cooper, who appears to have lost virtually none of her intensity. Murray Attaway was pleasant enough, although I knew none of the material that was performed. Kristen Hall seemed to really prime the crowd up; I think she has improved alot since the last time I saw her. Her set included songs from her two previous releases, and a couple of new ones. She was great. The real shock for me, though, was Nanci Griffith. I had seen her only one other time, and while she was a great performer, a little restraint was felt. Not so at this concert. With crowd favorites such as "It's A Hard Life Wherever You Go" and "I Wish It Would Rain" she had the crowd in the palm of her very capable hand. She even played a request from the crowd, "Outbound Plane". I happened to gaze up at the sky during this number, and was treated to the sight of a low-flying glider. Perfect timing or what? After Nanci Griffith left the stage, I was sincerely pondering how this day could get

any better, when Jackson Browne appeared to tune his piano. Our editor was in Heaven, and so was I when he performed an unexpected "Your Bright Baby Blues", and a very moving "Rock Me On The Water". It was really amazing. As if this wasn't enough already, when Mary-Chapin Carpenter took the stage, I was sure glad I had changed my travel plans, and came to Atlanta three weeks ahead of schedule. The crowd was already geared up from all the other musicians, and Mary-Chapin was in top form. Included in her set was "I Feel Lucky", "Passionate Kisses", a beautifully acoustic "Quittin' Time" and a new song in the same vein as "I Feel Lucky", "Shut Up And Kiss Me". A reprimand for "King Bubba" and his obscene remarks during Mary-Chapin's set; obviously this poor fool didn't have a clue. As M.C. left the stage, the crowd began to buzz....what would the Indigo Girls do? New stuff. or old, familiar stand-bys? How long would they play? The word around town was that they were to make a "brief appearance", which could mean anything from one or two songs to a full set. We waited in anticipation.

I made a mental note that since all of the Indigos guitars (including the electric ones) were being tuned, their set would probably not consist of a mere two or three songs. After what seemed like forever, the Girls took the stage. The crowd roared it's appreciation.

It was an unexpected and joyful surprise to see that the Girls were solo; not one band member was in view. Then, launching into "Chickenman", they began one of the most intense sets I have ever seen. Most of their performance consisted of new songs, from the soon-to-be released "Swamp Ophelia". Not only were we getting the ultimate in Indigo shows, we were also getting a preview of things to come. Highlights included "old" favorites, such as "Closer To Fine" and "Galileo", as well as a rousing version of the aforementioned "Chickenman". Although unfamiliar with the songs from the new album, I realized that the Girls were certainly putting much of their energy and emotion into this performance. "Dead Man's Hill", "Least Complicated", and "The Wood Song" were all powerfully unveiled, and the crowd loved it. I think my favorite part of the show had to be the Indigo's encore, a searing rendition of the first single, "Touch Me Fall". Armed with their newly-acquired electric guitars, fans watched in silent amazement as the Girls blasted their way through this haunting rocker. I was pleasantly stunned. Finally, everyone joined the Girls on stage for two encores, "Where Do The Children Play" and Elvis

Costello's "What's So Funny 'Bout Peace, Love, And Understanding?". The mob was ecstatic. I left realizing that although the show was to inform people about the environment, I obtained a seriously valuable musical lesson that day. It was well received.

Karin Dalesky
Tacoma, Washington

CLASSIFIEDS

AVAILABLE NOW: Carnival of Faith, a new Chicago acoustic act, has recently released a new CD entitled, Outside The Metro. Musical partners, Jill and Jeff, met each other last spring at an Indigo Girls' concert right outside of the Cabaret Metro. Carnival of Faith's CD is powerful and thought-provoking. If you enjoy Strange Fire, I highly recommend this CD. If you are interested in ordering the CD, please write to: Carnival of Faith P.O. Box 579-180 Chicago, Illinois 60657-9180. (Submitted by Debbie Slowinski).

WANTED: 1990 Chastain Prak t-shirt with cartoon figures. Lynn (813) 733-7488.

EXTRA: Swamp Ophelia CD in Jewel case. Debbie (708) 424-7879.

WANTED: "Least Complicated" U.S. promo CD, and "Land Of Canaan" U.S. 45, promo photo taken from the back of Amy and Emily walking down a dirt road with their guitars (or any other promo photo for that matter). Also, have live tapes to trade for other live tapes, photos, promo stuff, etc. (not for sale). Your list gets mine. Carolyn Spidle P.O. Box 940643 Plano, Texas 75094.

Cowboy Envy
April 28, 1994
Eddie's Attic
May 1, 1994
Inman Park

I was informed upon setting foot on Southern Soil that we would be spending the evening with Cowboy Envy, at Eddie's Attic. I was pretty excited, as I would finally get to see Dede Vogt, at least in some form. Overall, I must say that I was surprisingly impressed.

While we enjoyed our beers, the band begin to set up the stage, complete with a small stable of stick horses. "Is this like a joke?" I had the nerve to inquire of our editor. Her reply was not without a smile, "naw, it's all old cowboy-type stuff, like Tex Ritter. You'll Like it." I'll admit, I wasn't too encouraged. Upon listening to their first song, however, all of my fears involving as evening of bogus country twang were rapidly diminished.

Cowboy Envy borrow heavily from the forerunners of country music, many so old that I had never heard of them. Their approach, though, is hardly old-fashioned. "Too Short" (a.k.a. Dede), "Buffalo Kate" and the ever-smiling "Frenchie" include well known standards such as the classic "Cool Water" and "Happy Trails", along with some lesser known tunes, such as "The Woman With The Whip" (complete with visuals). Scattered around their set are a few originals, the best being "The Cowboy Envy Theme Song". I was amazed at how I enjoyed their show, as I am not at all a country music fan. Since this is more in the traditional vein, however, I have to admit that I was quite taken with Cowboy Envy's stage persona (s), their quick, fun-loving jokes, and their obvious delight in their cowboy roles. Upon learning of another show that was to take place at Inman Park during the street fair that weekend, I geared up for yet another rip-roarin' good time. I was anything but disappointed. With all the acoustic music in Atlanta, it takes some fairly brave and diverse souls to attempt something out of the apparent "mainstream". In any case, Cowboy Envy, along with their stage props, stable, and down-home good humor, fir the bill perfectly. If at all possible, see them!!!!!! You'll fell really good afterwards!

Karin Dalesky
Tacoma, Washington

From Big Issue, May/June 1994 (England):

Indigo Girls sum of their Art

If you can imagine Paul Simon getting into a scrap with The Roches at the back end of an REM song you already have a fair idea of how the new Indigo Girls album hits you.

Swamp Ophelia is touched by such an array of styles and shifts in mood it's easy to forget you're being wooed by the same band. But Amy Ray and her partner Emily Saliers don't necessarily agree with my version of events. "We call it acoustic music," says Amy modestly. "It's part of our outlook to work with any number of musicians to achieve the sounds we envisage for the songs. At the pre-production stage we sit around and discuss who would sound great on this track and who would suit that track. We then set out to find our chosen artists to enhance the song."

It's a bold sense of purpose which certainly draws in the great and the greater. Throughout their nine year career the Indigos have summoned such diverse talents as Michael Stipe, Mary Chapin-Carpenter, Hothouse Flowers, Scarlett Rivera, The Roches, Danny Thomson, and even Mike Batt to their studio summits...hell on this album they even let Dad sing on one track.

"We like to work with other musicians if it inspires us."

Although the main lyrical thrust of the album explores emotional landscapes one particular track stands out as a ferocious political comment. *This Train* borrows Woody Guthrie's anthem and transplants it to Nazi Germany where the box-car had a more sinister purpose.

"I visited the Holocaust museum in Washington and was deeply shaken," Amy recalls. "Standing in a carriage which was used to transport victims to the extermination camps, the image of trains took on a whole new meaning. Woody's song had gospel overtones and I wanted to use that in a more caustic, sarcastic way: After all, these people were being told they were on their way to a better place. By the end of the song however I'm trying to hold onto a legacy. I'm saying please remember all of these people: The doctor, the writer, the banker, the shopkeeper."

The duo are about to embark on a UK tour augmented by Sara Lee (bass player for the B52s,) and are looking forward to a return visit to Glasgow where they play the Pavilion on 1st June.

"Y'all are rowdy, that's what we like about the Scots. The last time we played Glasgow everyone knew the words and sang along. That's our kind of audience."

Darker side brings out the colours of Indigo

Two brilliant songwriters have a devout following in Britain, but they are still relatively unknown. **George Berry** reports.

POTTY college boys will pack in next to spiky-haired lesbians as cult American band Indigo Girls greet sell-out audiences during their British tour.

They will be received like intimate friends, yet so far the band from Atlanta, Georgia, has remained relatively unknown in this country. Indigo Girls are Emily Saliers and Amy Ray, both brilliant songwriters blessed with the most beautiful, instinctively balanced, pair of voices in contemporary rock, pop or folk.

Saliers and Ray have been friends for nearly 20 years, they went to the same school and college together. After graduating in 1985 they went

full-time as Indigo Girls, making records on their own label before landing the deal with Epic. *Swamp Ophelia*, their fifth album for Epic has just been released.

"Philosophical musings" is how Emily Saliers modestly describes her own songs. "I was raised in very fortunate circumstances so I have retained a sort of youthful optimism." That attitude gave rise to morally galvanising lyrics set to memorable upbeat tunes, great songs like *Closer to Fine* from their first album and *Hammer and a Nail* from the stunning 1990 work *Nomads Indians Saints*.

"England has been bombed, suffered wars, been worn down over time. Americans are very young and sort of wide-eyed" is Saliers' comment. "I believe

human beings have the power to change things but they have to be well organised."

Not that Emily is under any illusions about her home country.

"The whole urban scene is so devastating and depressing."

"The whole urban scene is so devastating and depressing with young black males killing each other and racism still rampant. In a way I feel very connected to the black community but I feel hopeless about me being able to make a change being an upper-middle-

class member of the white race which is responsible for so many of the problems."

Blond-haired Saliers' sweetness and light are at the heart of Indigo Girls' appeal. But without a darker side in the person of Amy Ray, the total effect would be nowhere near so compelling.

"Amy is a very passionate writer," says Emily "her songs tend to be painful or angry in style." For Ray emotional currents run turbulent and dangerous. She lives in a starker, more frightening world and sings with a harsher edged voice.

With interchanging leads and deft harmonising, the Indigo Girls sing of an extraordinary range of human experience. Hence the startling diversity of their fans.

They write lyrics gender unspecific, hence an avid following amongst gay women. One track on the new album highlights the inclusion of gays and gipsies amongst the victims of the Holocaust.

Hollywood has opened its arms to the Georgia duo. In the film *Philadelphia* Indigo Girls are heard singing the old Crazy Horse hit *I Don't Want to Talk About It*. They have just completed scenes in a new film with Whoopi Goldberg and Drew Barrymore.

Ten years of hard work honing a distinctive artistry seem about to pay off, soon everyone will have heard of Indigo Girls. The secret will be out.

□ *Indigo Girls perform at Sheffield University on Monday.*

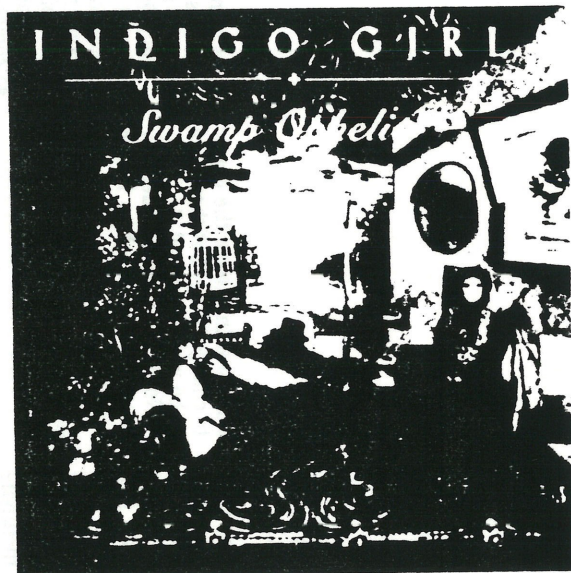
Indigo Girls
England
May/June 1994

Handbill given out at shows:

INDIGO GIRLS®

Swamp Ophelia

their new album



CD • Cassette • LP

475931 2 • 4 • 1

Released 30th May

11 new songs including the single "Least Complicated"

Indigo Girls UK Tour

May

Tuesday 31st - NEWCASTLE Riverside

June

Wednesday 1st - GLASGOW Pavillion

Thursday 2nd - MANCHESTER University

Friday 3rd - LONDON Hammersmith Apollo

Sunday 5th - BRISTOL Biekeller

Monday 6th - SHEFFIELD University

Tuesday 7th - WOLVERHAMPTON Wulfren Hall

Wednesday 8th - CAMBRIDGE Junction

Brilliance out of the swamp

From The Herald, May 24, 1994 (Glasgow, Scotland):

ELECTRIC storms snap and crackle over New Hampshire, interrupting power supplies and transatlantic phone calls. I know this because a bare-foot Indigo Girl is telling me about it via a payphone in the lobby of the New Hampshire hotel in which she's staying while on tour.

Emily Saliers, one half of the Indigo Girls, had begun our conversation in her room. Now, following a lull imposed by the forces of nature and an impromptu dash down the hotel stairs, a slightly breathless Emily has resumed our discussion of the duo's forthcoming album, *Swamp Ophelia*.

It's all a bit emblematic, really, because *Swamp Ophelia* is an album which possesses the organic vibrancy of a force of nature. I promise: it will blow the fuses in your heart, electrify your soul, and burn its way into your memory forever. It is released on the Epic label on June 6. Order your copy now and be assured that purchase will distinguish you as a person of the utmost taste, decency and discernment, as well as providing immeasurable improvement to your quality of life. It's the first breathing record of 1994.

But let's go back and discover how Emily and her Indigo partner, Amy Ray, got here from there, a

Indigos are rocking out powerfully with chiming guitars, or crafting gorgeous melodic interludes that are tender and thoughtful. Whatever the song, the Indigo Girls are always able to snag your heart-strings with pleasant melodic surprises.

But tell us, Emily: who, or what, is Swamp Ophelia?

"Amy was staying at a hotel in Orlando in Florida. She went on a nature walk and discovered a plant called a Swamp Ophelia. There was something evocative about the sound, the image." Swamp Ophelia thus crops up on the LP as a metaphor for the forlorn, the doomed. Swamp Ophelia is something or someone tantalisingly close but beyond mortal reach ("Touch me, I'm so beautiful... I'm torn down...").

Fittingly, the botanical Swamp Ophelia has proved elusive in real life. "We've looked it up in science books and can't find it."

Where can you next find the Indigo Girls? At some point in the future they'll be on cinema screens in *Boys On The Side*, acting as Whoopi Goldberg's backing band.

More immediately, Emily and Amy, assisted by renowned bassist Sara Lee, appear at Glasgow's Pavilion a week on Wednesday.

Attendance is obligatory; get set to attain mood Indigo Sisters.

BOSS GROOVES

Indigo Girls resemble nobody other than the Indigo Girls. Which is to say, if you haven't had the good fortune to hear them yet, that they are a beguiling blend of command and vulnerability, like a pair of roo-tin' tootin' Doris Days in Camlarity Jane.

They are strong wombyn, these Indigo Girls, assured and deft.

Their voices unite in a bitter-sweet vocal mix which can transmit sensitivity with full-pelt gusto, and vice versa. On a more artso-fartso level, the Indigo Girls have been hymned by critics as a blend of "feminism, New Age self-assertion, and the remnant spirituality of their native South". I'm a resolute lowbrow, so I wouldn't dare venture an opinion on this. All I know is I love their music.

Their current single, *Least Complicated*, has got intuitively complex lyrical bits, plus senselessly glorious bits where Emily and Amy's voices soar and go "Nah-nah nah-nah nah". *Swamp Ophelia*, the LP, is a dynamic tour de force throughout, whether the

high-school alliance in their Georgia home town of Decatur. For eight years until 1988, they toted their voices and guitars around Georgia clubs, "rock clubs, not folk clubs... not uptight-sitting-down-and-listening-rooms, more interactive-happening-type rooms."

One interactive Georgia happening was especially productive: Emily and Amy hooked up with R.E.M.'s Peter Buck and Michael Stipe, who guested on the Indigo Girls' self-titled major label debut album. That LP won the Indigo Girls a Grammy as Best Contemporary Folk Group. "I credit R.E.M. with our initial success," says Emily. "Their exposure jump-started us and gave us instant credibility, but after five years, I think we've stood the test on our own."

Dang right. There are further guests on the new, sixth Indigo Girls' platter — Iris Supreme Stipefulness again, plus Danny Thompson, the Roches, and Jane Siberry — but throughout, the In-

From Today, May 27, 1994 (England):

Perfection to the power of two

IMAGINE a perfect girl duo. One a philosopher, inspired by Joni Mitchell, brought up on classical choral music, owner of a clear, sweet soprano. The other a poet, inspired by Bob Dylan and Neil Young, a lover of grunge, and a writer of dark, brooding songs sung in a voice that can move from threatening growl to shattering howl.

Well there's no need to imagine. They exist, they're called the Indigo Girls and they have managed to reach their sixth album and ninth year without troubling the British charts despite great acclaim in America.

That's a shame because they're among the best musicians I know of – and my admiration was increased when I met them on the eve of a British tour and release of their new album, *Swamp Ophelia*.

Emily's the sweet one with orange-blonde hair that hasn't seen a hairdresser lately and trademark dungarees. She confirms that her major inspiration is literature. It's not every band whose songs include a love letter to Virginia Woolf...

"I just love books. I

by JAMES BENNETT

major in English. I'm very moved by works of literature and whenever I'm moved, that's when I write songs."

Love is Emily's big subject – hardly an original choice, but few sing about it as honestly and perceptively. "I think about love a lot," she tells me.

Her latest love song, *Power Of Two*, talks about two people sheltering each other, drying each other's tears.

"I think one of the most important functions of a relationship is comfort," she tells me. "People should try more to be there for each other – generally, not just in relationships.



Emily (left) and Amy met in school

It's such an alienating world, and it's not hard to be a listening ear for somebody."

The fact that both Emily and Amy's love songs are addressed to other women is, they like to think, by the by.

Emily came out recently in an American magazine. Amy, the dark half of the duo, tells me: "I've always

been out. To me, that's the only way I can live – being honest with myself and the people around me."

Amy's rendition of the Dire Straits song *Romeo and Juliet* is one of the most passionate things I have ever heard on record. her voice giving new life to the devalued phrase "shivers down the spine".

In that sense, it's rather like the voice of REM's Michael Stipe, and the Indigo girls have sometimes been described as the female REM after early collaborations between the two bands who both come from Georgia.

"We met Michael at a local show and he asked us to tour with them," says Amy. "That really helped us, but we don't get to see them anymore because we're both so busy. We miss them."

The girls also supported Neil Young on tour. "He's my hero," says Amy. "He's the king of rock 'n' roll as far as I'm concerned."

Although *Swamp Ophelia* has just crashed straight into the US Top Ten, both Amy and Emily say they have no desire to be as famous as either Young or REM. "We like where we are..." says Emily.

From Rolling Stone, June 2, 1994:

★ ★ ★ 1/2
BILLY PILGRIM

Atlantic

JEEZ, reality really does bite. And being twentysomething sucks. No jobs, no health care, and parents still don't get it. But love's kinda cool. And on their first album, Billy Pilgrim realize this. Armed with acoustic guitars and unfaltering harmonies, they venture into their generation's booby-trapped battlefield, and surprisingly, angst hasn't sounded this good in a long time.

Billy Pilgrim are actually Andrew Hyra and Kristian Bush, graduates of Atlanta's progressive folk-rock scene, and while they're far from revolutionary, they've latched onto a sensibility that cuts slap through the bone en route to the heart. This isn't to suggest that their stuff is sappy or slug-paced. It's quite the opposite, thanks to Don McCollister and Hugh Padgham's superslick production. Also contributing to this success is Kenny Aronoff and his signature percussion.

Billy Pilgrim are smart, catchy and sometimes unnervingly intense. Hanging on to vowels and spitting out consonants, Hyra belts with so much contained conviction that you want to scoop him up and tote him out of there.

Because of geographical proximity and exquisite guitarmanishp, Hyra and Bush will undoubtedly suffer from Indigo Girls comparisons (Emily Saliers even lends vocals on "Insomniac"). But they're no Indigo Boys. Rarely do they wallow in their discontent, and they even have fun on songs like the wonderfully addictive ode to love in superflux, "Hula Hoop."

A few songs do seem awkward, and at times, lyrics are unintentionally silly for the sake of rhyme ("I've tried everything short of Aristotle/To Dramamine and the whiskey bottle," from "Insomniac"). But those complaints are petty when you look at *Billy Pilgrim* as a passionate debut that taps into both the delights and disappointments of a generation that simply wants the comfort of what love can provide. That's where the urgency lies, and Billy Pilgrim play it as it lays.

— CHUCK DEAN

Indigo Girls
 Thursday
 June 2, 1994
 Manchester, England

SAILED	A1	E2	A-1 st
THREE HITS	A2	E1	—
TRIED TO BE TRUE	A1	E1	—
POWER OF TWO LOVE'S RECOVERY	A2	E2	5 th
FUGITIVE	A1	E1	—
LOVE'S RECOVERY	A2	E2	3 rd Low E ↓ D
WORLD FALLS	A1	E1	3 rd
WOOD SONG	A2	E2	A-DGDGBD E—
DEAD MAN'S HILL	A1	E1	—
LEAST COMPLICATED	A2	E2	A-2 nd E —
JOKING	A1	E1	E-DGDGBE
GHOST	A2	E2	—
THIS TRAIN R	A1	Dobro	2 nd Fret B ↓ A
CLOSER TO FINE	A2	E1	2 nd Fret
XXXXXXXXXXXX	XXXXX	XXXX	XXXXXXXXXX
TOUCH ME IF I FALL	Eks.	elec.	—
PRINCE OF D	A2	E1	—
WICKED MAN	A1	E2	Roth F ↓ D

Indigo Girls
 Sunday
 June 5, 1994
 Bristol, England

THREE HITS	A1	E1	—
HAMMER & NAIL	A2	E2	4 th
DEAD MAN'S HILL	A1	E1	—
WOOD SONG	A2	E2	Ⓐ - <u>D G D G B D</u> Ⓔ - <u>— — — — —</u>
SECURE YOURSELF	A1	E1	2 nd
POWER OF TWO	A2	E2	5 th
FUGITIVE	A1	E1	
MYSTERY	A3	E2	A — E DADGAD
LAND OF CANAAN	A1	E1	—
Va. WOOLF	A2	E2	<u>DADGBE</u>
REUNION	A1	E1	2 nd Fret
GALILEO	A2	E2	Ⓐ - 1 st Ⓔ - 5 th <u>DADGBE</u>
THIS TRAIN R	A1	E-3 Dobro	2 nd Fret A ↓ B
Least Complicated	A2	E1	Ⓐ - 2 nd Ⓔ - <u>— — — — —</u>
Chickenman	A1	E2	Both E ↓ D
***** TOUCH ME PAII	***** E1 E2	***** E1 E2	***** elec

From Guardian, June 7, 1994 (England):

POP

Indigo Girls

Hammersmith Apollo

Andrew Smith

INDIGO GIRLS Emily Saliers and Amy Ray have been in the business of earnest soul-searching for no less than nine years. You would think they would have found them by now. But no.

In any case, it is only in the last two that they have broken through to a mass audience, as the fanatic response of Hammersmith Apollo crowd at the weekend proved.

The acoustic singer-songwriter tradition this duo comes from is immune to the vagaries of fashion. That said, their take on it is more modern than most, for the Girls's sound is the sound of 1990s American suburbia: full of thirtysomething angst, it is the film *The Big Chill* set to music, adult-orientated rock

without the rock — the thinking person's easy listening. And so much cheaper than a course of therapy.

Those who, like myself, have always found an Indigo Girls album hard to sit through, will have been surprised by the buoyancy of the live show. Accompanied by Sara Lee's spare, subtle bass playing, the two women's closely harmonised voices (Saliers's a cross between Joni Mitchell and Ricky Lee Jones, Ray's reminiscent of kd lang) haunted the quieter numbers quite beautifully. The engagingly reflective *Power Of Two*, from the current *Swamp Ophelia LP*, was especially lovely, as was *Reunion*, which Ray wrote, in true thirtysomething fashion, about her recent high school reunion. Only when they try to cast their net wider do Indigo Girls run into trouble. *This Train Revised*, for instance, which was inspired by a visit to the Holocaust Museum in Washington DC, was overwrought and jarring. For the most part, though, the evening was a pleasant surprise.

From The Times, June 7, 1994 (England):

Warmed by the campfire

The skyscraping debut of the Indigo Girls' fourth major-label album, *Swamp Ophelia*, on the US chart at No 9 two weeks ago was the culmination of nine years of sweat for Amy Ray and Emily Saliers.

The duo from Decatur, Georgia, have augmented the acoustic folk style of their early independent recordings into an enriched dialogue of contemporary and traditional elements, taking hundreds of thousands of American fans

with them. Hence the instant acclaim for the new set, incorporating strings and woodwind, rock guitar and their adroit handling of the thorniest emotional imagery.

For all the profundity of their lyricism and the increasingly complex melodic architecture of their songs, the Girls still come over as unspoiled troubadours, and on this tour they appear without musical make-up, backed only by bassist Sara Lee from the B-52s. At their largest London gig to

Indigo Girls
Hammersmith
Apollo

date, the almost hysterical reception from a strong lesbian contingent showed Ray's status as a musical idol.

Since she and Saliers write their songs separately, it is easier than usual to identify the emotional currency employed by each: Ray is the

darker, more brooding soul, the voice of discontent on such new pieces as "This Train Revised". They opened the set with an example of Saliers's lighter approach, "Galileo" from the 1992 album *Rites of Passage*. Yet it is Saliers who wrote the current set's neo-classical "The Wood Song" which, like all their other material, boiled down beautifully to the acoustic guitars with which their ideas begin.

Still ill at ease in venues of this size, Saliers told us early on: "You're so far away, it sucks" and later encouraged the audience to gather as close as possible. Thus assembled around their campfire, things were instantly warmer. They sang like angels and played with force or restraint as required for their own mood. Indigo, yearningly on Saliers's "Ghost" or with cathartic thrashing on the evening's one electric song, the encore of Ray's "Touch Me Fall".

PAUL SEXTON

From The Washington Post, June 15, 1994:

Recordings

Indigo Girls Give Faith A Chance

By Mike Joyce

Special to The Washington Post

"Faith is one thing that's hard to deliver," sing the Indigo Girls on their new album, "Swamp Ophelia," and nowhere is that more evident than on the closing track, "This Train (Revised)." Inspired by a visit to the Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, Amy Ray recast the gospel song as a memorial to the Jews, Gypsies and homosexuals who died at the hands of the Nazis: "Here is a dancer who has no legs, here is a teacher who has no face, here is a runner who has no feet ... here is potential gone for good."

Yet, faith is the one thing that inspires most of the music on "Swamp Ophelia" (Columbia), the folk-rock duo's most ambitious, expansive and refreshing release. Not that there aren't shades of the all too familiar Indigo blues. The opening cut, "Fugitive," in fact, gets the album off to a ponderous start, as Ray, trying to balance a career and a relationship, describes the conflicting urges she feels in purple verse: "I'm harboring a fugitive, a defector of a kind, she lives in my soul, drinks of my wine."

More typical, though, is the next song, "Least Complicated," written by duo mate Emily Saliers. A relatively simple yet colorfully arranged acoustic ballad about repeating mistakes in life, it finds Saliers lost in reflection. "Oh, I'm just a mirror of a mirror of myself," she sings. There's at least as much innocence and irony here as angst, and as the album unfolds the Indigo Girls' well-charted fears often give way to hope.

"Power of Two" and "Mystery," both composed by Saliers, are contrasting love songs. The former has an almost old-fashioned romantic charm and tenderness, while the latter, which features singer Jane Siberry, finds Saliers quietly contemplating the inexplicable process that draws lovers together, making them "equal partners in a mystery."

While "This Train (Revised)" is the most obvious, and the most compelling, example of the Indigo Girls' reaching beyond their own lives for insight and inspiration, the album has several songs that suggest the duo isn't taking itself nearly as seriously as it once did. Even Ray's autobiographical ballad "Dead Man's Hill" doesn't concern self-extirpation so much as the way some painful childhood experiences are seared in memory.

Recorded in Nashville, "Swamp Ophelia" has the customary assortment of tart, swooping Indigo harmonies, but the duo and producer Peter Collins clearly wanted to add some surprises in the studio. Acoustic and electric instruments are used and sometimes blended, sharp dynamic shifts are common, and the Roches, among many other artists, pop up in cameo roles. While Ray's "Touch Me Fall" suffers from a contrived rock and string-quartet orchestration, the settings otherwise range from a spare acoustic guitar treatment of Saliers's affecting ballad "Fare Thee Well" to the imaginative and stirring arrangement of "This Train (Revised)," which makes marvelous use of the string quartet. (To hear a free Sound Bite from this album, call 202-334-9000 and press 8161.)

Kristen Hall

Kristen Hall, who opens for the Indigo Girls at Wolf Trap on June 23 and 24, also finds herself in a somewhat different musical setting on her new album, "Be Careful What You Wish For ..." (High Street). Like the Indigos, Hall has always been a soul searcher, though her lyrics are seldom oblique and never suggest that she's wallowing hopelessly in a troubled past.

Rather, her dusky alto voice imbues most of her songs with an unmistakable poignancy, making even the best of familiar yearnings expressed on "Even as I Know" seem personal and heartfelt. Occasionally, she falls for a convenient metaphor, only to come up with a song as trite as "Following My Compass." But more often she deftly contrasts lingering heartaches with angry or defiant ballads ("Proud Man" and "Prey to You") and songs of enduring, all-forgiving love ("Souls of a Lifetime").

Produced by drummer Jerry Marotta, the album retains the warmth of Hall's previous releases, yet expands the scope and textures by subtly incorporating elements of folk, rock, blues and country. Among the guest vocalists are Saliers and Matthew Sweet. (To hear a free Sound Bite from this album, call 202-334-9000 and press 8152.)

The Back Page

Greetings from the Lone Star State! I hope you all are doing well, it seems we have had enough natural disasters lately to last us for awhile. I would like to thank everyone who has sent in stuff lately, it has been a lot of fun checking my P.O. Box each afternoon, seems like everyday I hear from somebody. I am very happy to report that I have been doing a good job keeping up with my correspondence lately (no, really), so if there is anything you need or you just want to drop me a line you can expect a reply before Christmas for a change.

I am about ten days away from a vacation, I am going to throw some stuff in my truck and go drive around the western U.S. for two and a half weeks in mid-August. I found out after I had made my plans that Amy and Emily will be playing in Portland and Seattle while I am in the area so thanks to my good friend Karin and general admission seating I will be catching three shows while I am gone. When I get back Emily and Amy will be doing their Texas tour over Labor Day weekend so I will get to go to Austin, Houston, and Dallas and catch four more shows. Seems like it should be a heck of a month, I'll let you know about the shows when I get back.

I am also making plans to be in Atlanta for New Years Eve (and probably the week after), so if your going to be in town drop me a line and maybe we can meet up.

Guess that's it for now, the August issue should be out in a week (or so). Take care and be well-

CAROLYN ❄