

lifeblood

the unofficial go-head journal

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JCS RELEASED, VIDEO ON HOLD

November 15th saw the release of the Atlanta artists remake of the rock opera, "Jesus Christ Superstar". The two CD set, the brainchild of Michael Lorant, features Michael as Judas, Amy as Jesus, Emily as Mary, and a who's who of Atlanta artists playing the other roles. The remake, titled "Jesus Christ Superstar - A Resurrection" is very true to the original, omitting not one song or lyric. It's definatley worth chekcing out. I was able to find a copy for just \$14.99 at Blockbuster music (formarly Sound Warehouse) here in Plano, so hopefully it won't be to hard to find. All proceeds from the project go to various groups that are working against violence in our society. Two full cast stage performances were done at the Variety Playhouse in Little Five Points on Thanksgiving weekend, I was fortunate to be able to attend one of the shows and I will have all the details in the next issue.

"Watershed", the long hoped for official video compilation, was originally scheduled to be released on Tuesday, November 22nd, but that date has now been pushed back to after the first of the year. According to the press release, not only will it contain most of their videos (the list I saw did not include "Closer To Fine", hopefully just a clerical oversight), interview footage, and some of the home movies they shot in the "early days".

I recently heard that "Indigo Girls" is to be rereleased on December 5th as an "ultradisc", but have not been able to confirm that through any of the record stores around here.

Printed on recycled paper



Indigo Girls
Thursday
September 1, 1994
The Backyard
Austin, Texas

Kristen Hall:

Empty Promises
Cry Tomorrow
Wish I May
Out In The Country
Nothing
Chicago 5am
Heaven Knows

Set List:

Welcome Me
The Wood Song
Reunion
Ghost
Land Of Canaan
Power Of Two
Fugitive
Mystery
Hammer And A Nail
This Train (Revised)
Least Complicated
Allegory (Murray Attaway)
World Falls
Galileo
Chickenman

Encores:

Southern Man (w/ Kristen Hall)
Touch Me Fall
Closer To Fine

It's love 'em or leave 'em

Indigo Girls: intelligently introspective, or too wrapped around the axle?

This music can thrill you with its beauty and energy or give you a headache with its nonstop listing of questions that seemingly have no answers.

Touring to support their latest album, *Swamp Ophelia*, Amy Ray and Emily Saliers continue to tap into life's mysteries — relationships, death, fate, the ability to forgive — with a relentlessness that makes Joni Mitchell seem lazy.

It's telling that all but one of the songs on *Swamp Ophelia* are written in first-person. These women have taken the adage "write what you know" and run with it.

One song, *Fugitive*, finds the Girls struggling with their new-found fame: "Are they coming at us with cameras or guns? We don't know which, but we gotta run."

On another, *The Wood Song*, Ms. Saliers states her case for strength through adversity: "The wood is tired and the wood is old, and we'll make it fine if the weather holds, but if the weather holds then we'll have missed the point. . . ."

It's exactly this incessant

Fall Arts Preview

■ The Concert Calendar appears this week on Page 32 of the Fall Arts Preview special pullout section. It will return to Page 4 next week.

search for meaning, this stream-of-consciousness approach to lyric writing, that has earned Indigo Girls such a loyal following. That, plus their ability to write folksy, at times rocking, melodies.

Whether reveling in the minutiae of a street scene two floors below, recalling an adolescent romance or exploring the endless labyrinth of a love gone wrong, they generally leave you with the sense that, even if they can't find the answers, they're determined to keep on looking.

Only problem is, some folks might find the journey a bit tedious.

— Al Brumley

■ **DETAILS:** Indigo Girls, with David Wilcox, perform Sunday at 7:30 p.m. at Starplex Amphitheatre, Fair Park. Tickets \$20 and \$25 reserved, \$12.50 lawn. Call Ticketmaster at 373-8000 or metro 647-5700.

**Indigo Girls
Thursday
September 2, 1994
The Backyard
Austin, Texas**

Kristen Hall:

Cry Tomorrow
Don't Tell Me
Too Long Running
Nothing
I Have My Reasons
Chicago 5am
Heaven Knows
Empty Promises

Set List:

Fugitive
The Wood Song
Reunion
You And Me Of The 10,000 Wars
Center Stage
Joking
Virginia Woolf
Hand Me Downs
Least Complicated
This Train (Revised)
Angels In The Trees (Murray Attaway, Emily, Amy)
Language Or The Kiss
Chickenman
Galileo

Encores:

Southern Man (w/ Kristen Hall)
Touch Me Fall
Closer To Fine

**Indigo Girls
Thursday and Friday
September 1st and 2nd, 1994
The Backyard
Austin, Texas**

Thursday

KA-BOOM!!! After thunderstorms and flooding had caused me to delay my intended Wednesday night departure for Austin, this was the last thing I wanted to hear as I woke up Thursday morning. Luckily the storms were finally breaking up, and although the day was very dark and gray, the rain ended about half way to Austin and I made pretty good time. The show was general admission, so after checking into what seemed like my 10,000 Motel 6 of the year, I headed straight for the venue. It ended up being in the middle of nowhere, about 15 miles southwest of Austin, right in the heart of the hill country. The front of The Backyard featured a restaurant which overlooked the venue, a ticket window, and a take out bar-b-que stand, all housed in a wooden building complete with a wood boardwalk out front, the Fina station across the street being the only other sign of civilization for several miles in either direction. I found a good spot to park my truck, then scouted around, very surprised to find that arriving at 10am I was the first person in line. I had a great view of the venue itself through the wrought iron gate, it's a natural bowl with the stage set at the bottom, maybe 25 rows of folding chairs, then a terrace with three huge old oak trees providing shade to tables, then the deck from the restaurant looking out over it all. A very neat setting for a show. Not too much later some more folks showed up to wait in line and we spent a nice afternoon getting to know each other, drinking Shiner Bock's (real Texas beer, skip the Lone Star stuff) from the restaurant, and waiting for sound check. It sprinkled on us a few times, but it was beginning to look like we might have dodged the rain bullet for the day. The soundcheck was great, Amy and Emily recorded a super version of Gerard McHugh's "Thin Line" for a local radio station, and they seemed in great spirits and fired up for the show. Not too much later it was time for the gates to open and the mad dash for seats to begin. Thanks to the speedy friend of some of the folks I had spent the day talking with, I soon found myself sitting dead center in the front

row - once again defying the odds and amazed at my luck in getting good seats.

Kristen Hall came out and opened with a terrific set, just her and her acoustic guitar, quickly winning over a crowd that did not seem to be familiar with her music. A couple of songs before the end of her set, it began sprinkling, and just as she left the stage it began to pour and they cut the power to the stage. The rain kept up, letting up a little from time to time, but mostly just coming down hard and we soon found ourselves drenched and standing in about 4 inches of water. When it began to thunder and lightening, the realization that there might not be a show began to set in. During the times that the rain let up, one of the roadies came out and passed out towels to the people in the front row so we could help dry off the front of the stage and the cables, we were encouraged in our work by a large group of fans in the second and third rows that were singing Indigo Girls songs at the top of their lungs. They actually sounded pretty good. After a long time had passed Amy and Emily came out onto the dark stage, and the crowd went nuts. When the crowd finally quieted down, they told us that they were sorry but it was just too wet to play and that they would have to reschedule the show, but just as they started to leave the stage someone caught Amy's attention and pointed out that seconds before they came out it had stopped raining. She came up to the edge of the stage and peeked up at the sky, then held up her hand, indicating that she would be back. She went over and was talking with their crew at the side of the stage, but the sound man began taking down the mikes and we began to give up hope when finally Amy returned and said that if we did not mind waiting, and if the rain did not return, they would try to get the show in. For the most part the crowd went wild, I was surprised at the people who were sitting behind me, they were grumbling, wondering if it would be a full show and just how late it would run. Finally, the stage was dry and the equipment ready, and Amy and Emily hit the stage with a great version of "Welcome Me". After the song there was a slight delay as they tried to get the sound on the stage right (they would battle sound problems for the rest of the night), then Amy told us that they would try to make the show worth all the wait and the crowd went wild. The second song was "The Wood Song", and when the crowd went nuts at the "we'll make it fine if the weather holds" line and Amy and Emily both broke into huge grins. The rest of the set was great, the crowd

remained seated but sang along enthusiastically. There was no room for a stage rush, our knees were literally resting on the barricade. The encores began with Kristen Hall joining Amy and Emily for a superb version of "Southern Man". "Touch Me Fall" was next, right before the fast section Emily lost her place and stopped playing. Amy got her back on track but it seemed like the song did not run near as long as it had at other shows. After the show somebody told me that Emily had been distracted by a girl in a purple cape who was walking down the chairs a couple of rows back, tapping people on the heads like she wanted them to sit down. She said Emily gave her a look of major disapproval and told the fans not to sit down. After an enthusiastic version of "Closer To Fine" the show was over and a very tired looking Amy and Emily (it was after midnight) said goodnight and left the stage. The still soaked crowd filtered out, the show remarkable not only for the performance itself, but also for ours and Emily and Amy's perseverance in making it happen.

Friday

Rolling out of bed, dodging my still wet clothes, I peeked out the window and was disappointed to find yet another wet, gray dawn. I showered and dressed quickly and headed out of town to the venue, arriving at 9:30 and again very surprised to find that I was first in line. About 15 minutes later some of the people I had met the day before showed up and we settled in for another long days wait. A couple hours later one of the guys that worked at the venue came up and started talking with me. He said that he had noticed me sitting out there all day the day before and that because the show had run so late the night before a lot of their help had not come in yet and he wondered if I would like to earn some extra money helping out the caterer. I told him I would be willing to help for free, but that I did not want to miss sound check and he assured me that I would not lose my place in line so in I went. I ended up preparing the Indigo Girls and Kristen Halls' dressing rooms, stocking the refrigerators and munchie tables, making Amy and Emily's dip, putting out fresh towels, and sweeping. There was some talk among the people who worked at the venue that Emily and Amy had not been very happy with the sound problems the night before and that they felt the show had been sub

par. I was surprised, whatever it may or may not have been missing from a technical standpoint was more than made up with it's heart. Anyway, when I got done I was hot and sweaty from running up and down the stairs so I told them I was going to head on back outside and hang out, as I was leaving the caterer even gave me a Swamp Ophelia T-shirt for helping out. It was really a neat way to spend the afternoon.

Soundcheck was great once again, but things got a little tense during the afternoon. The guy at the bar had turned on the weather channel for us and the radar screen was basically all green, with the exception of the venue. We figured we were done for but although it rained in the area all night we never got another drop after the gates opened. Once again getting up early paid off, not only did I get to help set up the dressing rooms but I found myself in the center of the front row.

Kristen Hall opened again and turned in another great set. A lot of the crowd was the same as the night before so they gave her an enthusiastic welcome and listened along attentively. Finally it was time for Emily and Amy, they hit the stage with a great version of "Fugitive" and played a terrific set, seemingly trying extra hard to make up for the sound problems the night before. One of the highlights was "You And Me Of The 10,000 Wars", I love watching Amy intensely standing as still as possible playing single notes on her guitar at the end of the song. Emily's "Language Or The Kiss" was another standout, it gives me goosebumps everytime I hear it live. During the encores Kristen Hall really tore it up on the harmonica on "Southern Man", and "Touch Me Fall" came off without an hitch. "Closer To Fine" once again closed the show and as Amy and Emily left the stage it was back to the motel for some sleep before heading off to Houston for the next leg of the Texas Tour.

Carolyn Spidle
Plano, Texas

Indigo Girls
Thursday
September 3, 1994
The Woodlands
Houston, Texas

Kristen Hall:

Heaven Knows
Too Long Running
I Have My Reasons
Nothing
Wish I May
Out In The Country
Don't Tell Me
Empty Promises

Set List:

Fugitive
The Wood Song
Secure Yourself
Hammer And A Nail
Reunion
Power Of Two
Land Of Canaan
Mystery
This Train (Revised)
Least Complicated
Angels In The Trees (Murray Attaway, Emily, Amy)
Ghost
Chickenman
Galileo
Kid Fears

Encores:

Language Or The Kiss
Southern Man (w/ Kristen Hall)
Touch Me Fall
Closer To Fine

Indigo Girls
Saturday
September 3rd, 1994
The Woodlands
Woodlands, Texas

Up with the sun and off to Houston, the show was reserved seating so I took the "scenic route", driving on the backroads, avoiding the Interstate, in search of the elusive Chickenman. Still no luck. I arrived at the venue around 1pm and wandered around the woods surrounding the place for awhile, soaking up the sunshine and enjoying the nice but hot day. Finally I settled in outside the gates to rest and wait for the soundcheck. While I was waiting a girl came out of the ticket booth on the inside and asked me if I was the person she remembered waiting outside the venue all afternoon for the Indigo Girls show there in July of 1992. I sheepishly said yes, but she was real nice and we ended up talking for quite awhile. She had not gotten to see the other show but I convinced her it would be worth her while to stick around and see the one that night. I get a lot of flak from my friends, especially those who aren't into the Indigo Girls, for waiting outside of venues all day to see the shows. The only reply I have is that it makes the show more special for me if I focus my whole day on it, plus something cool always seems to happen.

Soundcheck was really good, I managed to find a small gap where I could look through the fence and see around the screen of vegetation that blocks the stage. Emily did a great version of "Songbird" by Fleetwood Mac, and Amy was still doing the songs that I had heard in Seattle and have not yet identified. Pretty soon it was time for the gates to open and I found my seat, one row removed from the orchestra pit almost in front of the speakers on Emily's side. Not bad at all. Kristen Hall came out and opened again, her third straight killer set. I was a little disappointed in the crowd, they were still milling around and not real attentive. Their loss.

Finally Amy and Emily hit the stage, the crowd was enthusiastic but subdued, I'm not sure if it was the venue (the summer home of the Houston Orchestra - ticket prices had started at \$45) or what but they were the least demonstrative crowd I think I've ever been a part of at an Indigo Show. They opened with "Fugitive" and "The Wood Song", it took me awhile to notice what was missing but it was the voice of the

crowd, they were listening but not singing along. Emily and Amy seemed to turn it up a notch and did a stunning version of "Secure Yourself" followed by a rousing "Hammer And A Nail" They really did a great job on the set lists, not only blending the new songs with the old, but including a wide variety of their older material. "Ghost" was another pleasant surprise. "Chickenman" featured a long introduction by Amy, she talked of meeting the Chickenman back in 1989 when they were driving in their van (Emily was asleep) from Houston to Austin and the long journey that they have had since and all the various people in their lives. The set ended with "Kid Fears", the crowd did manage to rouse itself enough (mostly while still sitting) to sing the harmony. A beautiful rendition of "Language Or The Kiss" began the encores, which again found the crowd sitting down. After "Southern Man" and Touch Me Fall", the show again closed with a great version of "Closer To Fine", which unbelievably found half of the crowd still sitting down. Despite, and perhaps because of, the strangeness of the crowd, this was a very intense show. It almost seemed like Amy and Emily were giving everything they had trying to win them over. Afterwards it was back in the truck for the all night drive back to my home and the finale of the Texas tour.

Carolyn Spidle
Plano, Texas

Indigo Girls
Sunday
September 4, 1994
Starplex Amphitheater
Dallas, Texas

Set List:

Welcome Me
The Wood Song
Reunion
Galileo
Power Of Two
Center Stage
Fugitive
Love's Recover (w/ David Wilcox)
Land Of Canaan
Mystery
Virginia Woolf
Hand Me Downs
Least Complicated
Chickenman

Encores:

Language Or The Kiss
Touch Me Fall
Closer To Fine
Prince Of Darkness

**Indigo Girls
Sunday
September 4, 1994
Starplex Amphitheater
Dallas, Texas**

The sun was high in the beautiful Texas sky when I finally got out of bed, showered, and headed down to the venue for the last Texas show, the last show period for this leg of the tour. I arrived at the venue early as usual, and waited around for the gates to open. Although the bulk of the seats were reserved (including mine), before long there were a number of people waiting around to get first grab at the best spots on the lawn behind the reserved seats. I don't know if it's because Dallas is my home or that the fans are different here, but for the first time in a long time I did not meet any of the fans outside the venue. They all seemed into their groups. In true Texas fashion there were a few tailgate parties going on in the parking lot by the main entrance, but in true Dallas fashion there were a number of cop cars circling around making a "show of force". Anyway, soon the gates opened and I found myself with an excellent seat in the eighth row of the center section, right by the aisle. Very cool. Before long the folks in the seats next to me showed up, there were two high school girls that I had meet in line when I was waiting for tickets. They were really into the Indigo Girls, but mentioned that they hadn't yet been able to get any CD's but Rites Of Passage and Swamp Ophelia. I assured them that adding the others to their collection would be money well spent. They were a lot of fun to talk with, this was the first real concert they had ever been to and they were really keyed up.

David Wilcox opened the show, I had heard a lot of good things about him but had never heard any of his stuff. He was really impressive. He stood in the mixture of stage lights and dusk and told stories and sang his songs with just the guitar to accompany him. If you ever get a chance to see him, do.

Finally it was time for Amy and Emily. I was a little bit curious to see how the crowd would be, after last night in Houston I did not hold out much hope, but they gave them a warm welcome and were more enthusiastic than any Dallas crowd I had ever been a part of. Emily and Amy were really pumped up and turned in a killer set. They brought out David Wilcox for a stunning version of "Love's Recovery",

the harmonies were incredible. In Houston the night before the crowd had brought up an unbelievable number of gifts, including a multicolored vest and a lot of shirts for Amy, the trend continued in Dallas. At one point someone gave Emily a container of bubbles, which she opened and blew some bubbles from. During "Virginia Woolf", at the line "some will fret...", Emily paused to brush off a large bug that had settled on her shoulder (this is Texas after all).

All too soon they were into the encores, and at the first chord in "Closer To Fine" we had an honest to goodness stage rush. I ended up against the barricade about six feet to Amy's right, it was really cool to hear a Dallas crowd singing and clapping along, and Amy and Emily were clearly having a great time. Amy was roaming all over the stage with her guitar, reminiscent of the "old days" when she hardly ever stayed in one place. She almost made through her whistling part, but started laughing towards the end and had to give it up. After the song was over I thought the show was through, but they huddled on stage for a minute and then proceeded to play a beautiful rendition of "Prince Of Darkness", complete with some major harmony vocals provided by the crowd. When the song was finished the crowd pleaded for more, but with big smiles and waves Emily and Amy left the stage and the house lights came up. I was pleased to see that my two high school aged friends had managed to get right up to the stage when the rush happened, they were both smiling and talking about how great the show had been. What a great night!

Carolyn Spidle
Plano, Texas

Indigo Girls' appeal great sans trends

Houston Chronicle 9-5-94

By RICK MITCHELL
Houston Chronicle

Pop music is a business based largely on chasing trends. Last year, it was grunge and gangsta rap. This year, it's riot grrrls and jazzy hip-hop. Next year ... who knows?

But every so often, a band infiltrates

Music review

the pop mainstream without bowing to any of the obvious trends. Witness the Indigo Girls, an Atlanta-based acoustic duo that played to about 5,000 fans at the Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion in The Woodlands Saturday night.

So how is it that the Indigo Girls — Amy Ray and Emily Saliers — have been able to sell more than 4 million copies of their five albums, including the latest Top 10 smash, *Swamp Ophelia*?

Certainly, their affiliation with the new wave of Southern rock bands hasn't hurt. Michael Stipe and R.E.M. appeared on the Indigo Girls' self-titled

1989 album, and ex-B52's bassist Sara Lee is a regular collaborator in the studio.

But the main reason the Indigo Girls have been able to appeal to a wide audience is so obvious you almost hesitate to believe it: They're really good.

While Ray and Saliers have known each other since they were in elementary school, and have been singing together since high school, they're polar opposites.

The dark-haired Ray is the frustrated rocker, pacing the stage and strumming hard on her acoustic guitar. The blond Saliers is the sly folkie, standing stock-still while plucking out delicate lead-guitar lines.

The intriguing combination of Ray's flinty alto and Saliers' pristine soprano defines the Indigo Girls' distinctive vocal sound. Like previ-

ous folk-pop groups from Peter, Paul and Mary to Crosby, Stills and Nash, they are masters of counterpoint. Their arrangements often feature two simultaneous melodic lines, sometimes with separate sets of lyrics to match.

Ray tends to write most of the group's topical-commentary songs, while Saliers sticks to more personal expressions of love and faith. Saturday's show opened with Ray's *Fugitive*, a powerful statement from the new album about the conflicting demands of love.

The song repeats the memorable verse, "I was aching with freedom/kissing the damned...."

Ray also delivered the gut-wrenching *This Train Revised*, which pointedly mentions Gypsies and homosexuals, as well as Jews, among victims of the Nazi Holocaust.

These were contrasted by Saliers'

straightforward love songs, such as *Power of Two*. Not that everything Saliers writes is so hopeful. In *Least Complicated*, a woman dreams of starting over with a clean slate, while waiting for the kids to come home from school. There are no easy answers, the song concludes.

The Indigo Girls brought out guest Murray Attaway, former vocalist with the group Guadalupe Diary, to sing his own *Angels in the Trees*. They also invited opening act Kristen Hall to join them during the encore on a heartfelt version of Neil Young's *Southern Man*.

Ray and Saliers switched to electric guitars for the haunting *Touch Me Fall*, the single and video track from *Swamp Ophelia*. The recorded version of the song features a string quartet, replaced here by grungy guitar blasts.

OK, so they're not totally im/mune to trends.

From The Dallas Morning News, September 5, 1994:

MOOD INDIGO

Acoustically, Girls give powerful performance

By Matt Weitz

Special Contributor to The Dallas Morning News

Rock 'n' roll started out easy enough: Plug in the guitars, feed some juice to the noise-boxes and you were sure to draw a crowd in no time. It was roof-raising and hip-shaking at its most basic, and sometimes it seemed that subtlety got a little lost amid all the tumult and shouting. If you wanted to hear the words, man, go to a coffeehouse or something.

Sunday night the Indigo Girls proved that you could still shake the walls and manage to get a message through, and that two guitar players who knew what they were doing could fill a space the size of Starplex.

Playing to approximately 7,000 fans — a crowd much more rambunctiously enthusiastic than the larger Steely Dan audiences of Friday and Saturday nights — Emily Saliers and Amy Ray delivered a set that was drumhead tight and skimmed along with the smooth momentum of a sailboat running with the wind.

They combined their two acoustic guitars to amazing effect, Ms. Ray providing a relentless strumming rush that Ms. Saliers would either run alongside of or veer off from, digging into her fret board for leads no less accomplished for their simplicity.

Their vocals — and even their perso-

nas — followed a similar pattern. When singing, they would combine their parts, fitting them with a precision that suggested they'd been born to sing together. They would sing the same phrase, producing a ribbon of harmony as sweet and drawn out as taffy. Separately, one would take the lead and the other would sing a rhythmic counterpoint, the Greek chorus to the other's narrator.

Ms. Ray is the darker of the two, more the declaimer; as such she's the perfect balance for the sweeter, somewhat lighter musings of Ms. Saliers. Switching guitars between every song, the two stood at the foot of three large tarps painted with fractured scenes similar to the cover of their new album, *Swamp Ophelia*. As they ran through their catalog — hitting oldies like *Land of Canaan*, a positively epic *Chickenman* and more recent cuts off *Swamp Ophelia* and its predecessor — it became apparent that the backdrop was going to be the evening's only disjointed feature.

The most striking moment came when opener David Wilcox joined the pair on-stage for *Love's Recovery*, immaculately blending his voice with theirs and providing stunning three-part harmony to a song that Leonard Cohen would be proud to claim.

Matt Weitz is a Dallas free-lance writer.

The Back Page

Hi! I hope all is well in your corner of the world. I am running a little behind getting this out this month, but am proud to say that I have finally taken the plunge and purchased my own computer. Now that I don't have to scam time on other peoples systems I hope to stay a little more current. I also have gained access to the Internet, so in addition to my P.O. Box you can now reach me at "underdog@onramp.net".

Tour news: Amy and Emily are heading back out on the road again (this time reportedly with a band). December will find them playing a series of dates on the east coast, including three shows in Atlanta in mid-December. Each of the first two shows in Atlanta sold out in less than 10 minutes, a lot of die hard fans were not able to get tickets. Tickets for the third show have not gone on sale yet but will probably be just as hard to come by. From the rumor mill, I still don't have any dates but it looks like the promised \$10 Tour may turn out to be a \$7.50 Tour instead, with 5 shows on each coast. Reports have it that the Swamp Ophelia tour will continue through May of 1995.

If you want to send in your lists for the top 10 albums of 1994 I'll compile them for the January issue. I will be in Atlanta December 30th thru ??? and San Francisco January 8th thru the 15th, if you are going to be in either of those places drop me a line and we'll see if we can meet up. Other than that have fun Christmas shopping and I'll catch up with you in a couple of weeks -

Take care and be well,

CAROLYN :)

From Melody Maker, November 1989:

Side lines

INDIGO GIRLS

"THERE is a similarity between us and bands like Guns N' Roses," says Amy Ray of THE INDIGO GIRLS. It's a thought that sends the imagination reeling.

Then Amy explains: "The similarity's not in what they're saying, but the passion behind what they're saying. We haven't got a full band behind us, but I think there's a lot of aggression in my material. And anyway, every one of those heavy metal groups has their acoustic guitar ballad."

The Indigo Girls shouldn't have to be defensive about the gentleness and thoughtfulness in their music. Those qualities have played a big part in taking Amy and partner Emily Saliers from relative obscurity to mass critical applause and major support slots with R.E.M. and 10,000 Maniacs. But Amy's keen to stress her fondness for the musical hard stuff.

"I listen to Public Enemy," she tells me. "They're the Bob Dylan of the black ghetto culture. They're speaking about revolution in a lot of ways, and about black pride — they don't want to assimilate into white culture. There are a lot of things they preach that I think are racist, but they've been a strong voice for some black people in America."

From the outside, it appears that The Indigo Girls' rise to prominence has been dizzyingly rapid. The pair have been playing together for eight years now, but Emily plays down the changes that this year's events must have brought.

"The only real change," she says, "is that now we play in towns we've never been to before, and people are coming to hear this music they know, which is our music. That's wonderful."

The Girls' long-standing friendship with R.E.M. led to Michael Stipe's guest appearance on their eponymous album earlier this year. Do they, I wonder, envy or pity Stipe when they see him in his new, elevated position?

"I never envy him, ever," says Amy. "Every now and then, for a brief moment, I pity him. When they're in the middle of a tour, it's really hard to relate to any of them on the level that we're used to, which is a home-town level. They're busy, they're focussed on their music and that's a real pressure to be under — because how do you come down from something like that? Not so much the ego trip of it, but how do you come back to the situation where you're just living in Athens and everything is very slow?"

Emily: "And weirdos bother him — obsessed fans who think he's godlike. I feel sorry for him then."

"But," Amy emphasises, "that whole band has handled everything that's happened to them incredibly well. They care about everybody who works for them, and they're all politically correct. They support causes just to make people aware of them, so they can make an informed choice — it's not like saying, 'You've gotta vote for the same guy I'm gonna vote for. There's an ulterior, educational motive in everything they do.'"

Have The Indigo Girls acquired their own weirdo following yet.

Emily answers with a shudder: "We know a few people who are on the edge of being strange. We try not to ignore people like that, but I would not encourage somebody who wanted to have a relationship with me because I'm an Indigo Girl. But, for the most part, it's just genuine people. And we're as goofy as anybody — we'll come out on stage and trip, and say dumb things, or I'll spit on the front row..."

To coincide with the duo's first visit to the UK, their first major-label single, "Closer To Fine," is being re-promoted.

"It's a song that's meant to be hopeful," says Emily, its author. "I was thinking about the ways in which people try to sort their problems. My equilibrium was off for a time, and I thought that, if I took a vacation, everything that I was worried about would be okay."

"The song says that the less you say, 'This is the thing that's gonna make everything better', the closer you'll be to fine'. — DJ

