

# lifeblood

the unofficial go-head journal

june 30, 1995

issue #38

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## 4.5 - THE BEST OF THE INDIGO GIRLS

"4.5", a "best of" collection of Amy and Emily's material, has been released in England. The CD reportedly has a bird sitting on a bush on the cover, and a drawing of a bug on the inside. Interestingly, the CD booklet does not include the lyrics to the songs. The catalogue number is EPC 480439 2, and the track list is as follows:

Joking  
Hammer And Nail (the 'a' is left out)  
Kid Fears  
Galileo  
Tried To Be True  
Power Of Two  
Pushing The Needle Too Far  
Reunion  
Closer To Fine  
Three Hits  
Least Complicated  
Touch Me Fall  
Love's Recovery  
Land Of Canaan  
Ghost

As of this writing, I have not heard of any plans to release the collection in the United States. Original plans were for "Closer To Fine" to be released as a single to support the CD, but apparently that plan has been scrapped.

The rest of this issue is devoted to some great interviews and writings from the "Honor The Earth" tour.. Take care and be well -

Caron ::

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## **From Aquarian Weekly, June 21-29, 1995**

Interview with Emily Saliers:

Aquarian Weekly: Tell me how you got involved with the whole "Honor The Earth" Concept.

Emily Saliers: Amy met Winona La Duke at Earth Day in Foxboro Stadium. And they started talking about some of the issues, some of the activism that Winona was involved in. So we agreed to do a few shows. I guess Winona came up with that title "Honor The Earth." That was back in '93 that we did those shows....

AW: Where were those shows?

ES: Those were in Minneapolis and in that part of the country. And it was really successful and very profound for me and Amy - we learned a lot, we met a lot of wonderful people. So we said, 'Let's do a whole tour where we can really have it be intense, where we can get a lot of press coverage, and bring to light a lot of these issues to other people.' It just took this long to get it all together.

AW: The two of you must get really swamped with requests to do any number of benefits.

ES: We get approached all the time, and it's really hard to say no. It used to be that we'd see all the requests, but now everything goes through the office. That's good, because it would be so exhausting to have to say 'No' to everything personally.

AW: Is there a goal as to how much money this month-long tour will raise? I'm sure you're equally concerned about raising public awareness as well.

ES: Well, the goal is supposed to be somewhere around a quarter of a million dollars - that's profit. Amy and I were thinking that it was going to maybe be more. That's the last figure that I heard. But, obviously, I won't know until everything is done.

AW: But I would imagine everything is pretty much all sold out

ES: Pretty much. We played in Fargo, ND last night. We'd never played there before. It was a good crowd, but it wasn't totally sold out. All the other shows are all sold out.

AW: Do you have any merchandise that you're selling?

ES: Yep, we're selling 'Honor The Earth' t-shirts and long-sleeve shirts, and caps, and posters. All that money goes to the benefit as well.

AW: Have you also been doing lots of press?

ES: Lots of interviews, press conferences, there's printed information in the lobby for people who come to the shows. Winona La Duke speaks every night. There's a slide show after she speaks that has quotes from different indigenous peoples - the photography is stunning. Winona explains to the audience that she has a couple of cards that she wants people to fill out. They get sent to congress people or local leaders that have to do with specific issues. So, it's really trying to saturate people with as much information as possible.

AW: I wouldn't be surprised if some other musicians picked up the baton and tried to keep this going

ES: Well, apparently it's hard to get musicians to commit to things like this. I don't know why. Some of these Native people were telling us that people talk a lot about doing stuff with Native Americans, but they just don't do it. Or, they use Natives in their music - or, on their covers - but it doesn't really affect Native people and their issues.

AW: This quote from Winona is so profound, "If we build a society based on honoring the earth, we build a society which is sustainable, and has the capacity to support all life forms." That just seems like such a simple 'Take care of the earth and it will take care of you' philosophy.

ES: Which is a hard thing, as you know, when you come up against industrialism, capitalism, and greed. Obviously, the population has exploded. It's hard to imagine the whole world living as indigenous people do. There's so much more that can be done in industrialized society that is respectful of the earth. I mean, give me a break. They talk about jobs being lost - like when owls are protected and things like that. But so many jobs could be created if we changed our way of thinking about things like using alternative energy sources, and using recycled materials. Jobs could be

created in recycling plants, and people who are out in the fields exploring ways to use alternative energy, and all kinds of things. We just have to change our way of thinking.

AW: Well, that's a problem. Most people don't like the concept of change.

ES: But, it's like turn off your water when you're brushing your teeth, and turn off your lights when you're not using them, and write on two sides of paper. It's simple things like that that make a huge difference.

AW: You've been to one reservation so far. What was that like? Was that the first time you'd ever visited one?

ES: I've driven through reservations - just because there are parts of the country where you have to - but I'd never been invited to one. It was great. It's really something. It's where Winona lives, too. So, she took us around, gave us a tour, and talked about a lot of the issues, and the people. Then, we went to the Indian school, and played for the kids. And, there was the ceremonial beating of the drum and songs. It was great.

AW: I wasn't at all surprised when I first heard about this tour. You guys have always done the best things.

ES: Well, we just get so much joy out of it, you know. We're learning as much - and taking home as much - as anyone else involved.

AW: Since you're in that neck of the woods - and it will be 20 years since the shootout near the Jumping Bull Ranch in Oglala, SD - has the subject of Leonard Peltier's wrongful imprisonment come up?

ES: It hasn't come up much on this tour, actually - maybe a couple of times in passing conversation. These issues are more focused on the environment. That case is not being focused on this tour, but obviously, it's a concern.

AW: Lately, it seems that there has been some major misrepresentation of Native Americans in movies and on television. With the possible exception of 'Northern Exposure,' you never see a Native person who's presented as a functioning person in 1995.

ES: I haven't seen 'Northern Exposure.' But I think it's probably the same thing that's been happening through history. The one thing that I learned

from a class Amy and I took together at Emory is that there's so much that was written that wasn't true. That's because it's written from the white man's perspective. Then you have accounts that date back to when the discoverers came over and tried to shove Christianity down the Indian's throats. And they wrote historical accounts, and they were just passed down through time. So, there was all that deception going on. In order to get a true account, you need to get it from Native people - or you need to get it from people who were living on the reservations and had contact with the Natives.

AW: Now you're coming across, I would assume a variety of tribes. There's no fighting going on amongst the tribes?

ES: Not that we've come across. I know that some of that goes on. And, I know, historically there were tribes that didn't get along with other tribes - supposedly. I guess that's just part of humanity - people not getting along. But, no we haven't come across that yet.

AW: Have you written any songs about your experiences, yet?

ES: Songs will definitely be coming out of it. We've only been on the road a week, and the schedule's been pretty hectic. Amy wrote "Jonas and Ezekiel" - or, at least the part that says every land is Native land and spiritual - that was inspired by our earlier shows.

AW: You had a variety of people opening these dates for you - including some Native musicians like Pura Fe.

ES: Right. Pura Fe and her band, Ulali, opened up two of the shows. We hung out with those guys - they're wonderful. We want to tour with them in the future. We're having Native artists open all the shows.

AW: Have the two of you been doing any performing with any of the Native people?

ES: They come out and sing on 'Closer to Fine.' There's a song that Ulali sang that we'd like to learn. We just haven't had any time.

AW: What are your plans after the tour ends in early June?

ES: We're going to England to do a festival at the end of June. We're doing a week of 'Jesus Christ Superstar' shows in July in Seattle. Then we're taking a long break - like a year off.

AW: So, you won't be going into the studio at all?

ES: We're putting out a live album this Fall. And, we're doing the Newport Folk Festival in August.

AW: Did you do anything special to commemorate Earth Day?

ES: We played an Earth Day show in Atlanta - it was real alternative. We had Jeff Buckley, G. Love and Special Sauce, Mike Watt, and the drummer from Nirvana - Dave Grohl came. It was a good turnout but the weather was horrible. It wasn't cold, but there were thunderstorms, and it was a mudbath. Eddie Vedder was there, too. So, it was cool.

**From UK VH-1's "Take It To The Bridge" show, June 22, 1995:**

Pip Dann: Right now, it's my pleasure to welcome to the studio a duo making a fleeting visit to the UK to play the Glastonbury Festival. Amy Ray and Emily Saliers are the Indigo Girls - they are about to release a jam-packed compilation CD and they join me right now.

Thanks for coming to the show - it's great to meet you. Now, before we get to Glastonbury, you've just come off a pretty amazing tour by the sound of things. Can you tell us what you've been up to over the last while ?

E: It was called "Honor The Earth Tour" - it's hard to explain it succinctly - but it was called "Honor The Earth Tour": it was Native American issues. We raised money and awareness and went onto Native American reservations and played there. It was a month-long tour and we just got back from it so I was explaining to you just what a profound impact it's had on our lives. It was the culmination of a whole touring year and a half and so we ended it that way. Just got back from that.

P: So is Glastonbury then going to be "the end" for a while ?

A: Yeah, we're doing Glastonbury and then we have one more festival in August in the States, but we're taking like a year off from the road. We're releasing a live record over in the States - I guess it's going to come out here too - of stuff we've been recording over the last 5 years. Just, you know, different weird things we've done. We'll probably wait a while to do our next record. Go and breathe.

P: It sounds like, you know, from this album that's released as well, called "4.5 ", which is a "best of", there's a time of summation in your lives at the moment. Is that right ?

E: That is right.

A: Sort of...It kind of feels like that.

E: Yeah, it's clear to both of us that it's a time to really take a break and to involve ourselves in some, you know, some personal things and to rest and to collect our thoughts and our beings. I'm sure that, you know, when it's time to make the next record, we'll be ready, fired up and ready to go.

P: Do you think it will be a change - do you think that with it being 10 years of the Indigo Girls, things will change, it'll come back differently ?

A: It's hard to say, you know. Emily and I tend to live really different lives but end up writing about the same subject matter in our songs, it seems like. We never know where we're heading as a group. We're probably going to work with the same producer [Peter Collins] that we've been working with, but he's got sort of an endless potential of different styles too, so I think we're just going to write the songs and do what feels, you know, the best. We're not afraid to experiment, but we're also not afraid to go back to some of our roots, you know, and be very pure, you know, as far as acoustic music goes.

P: You've done a lot of stuff. In the last sort of while, there's been a couple of films out here where your music's been involved. I'm thinking of the Whoopi Goldberg...

E: "Boys On The Side".

P: ..."Boys On The Side". How did you get involved in that ?

E: I think that the record company has feelers out to movie things. We've had scripts sent out to us before and it just didn't work out, but Amy and I both read the script and liked it a lot. We had a fan in some of the people who were running the music for the film and so we just basically played ourselves. It was fun. It's a good movie. It tackles issues like racism and homophobia and AIDS - things like that - in a Hollywood setting, which is, you know, courageous, sort of, for Hollywood, especially part of it.

P: This week's "Time Out" has got a big thing on "Lesbian Chic" - I don't know if you've seen it - and you're quoted in there as saying you're not sure whether maybe your sexuality has hindered your career at certain times. Do you think that it has ? Or do you think it's coming full circle now and perhaps it doesn't matter any more ?

A: It's always hard to put a finger on it, you know, on what's hindering you or what's helping you. I think that the music industry has come around to a certain degree, but I also think that they think that if there's one really popular gay artist and they give that person a lot of, you know, airplay, then they think they've taken care of the gay world, pretty much, and that they've done their part. The problem is that they still see things so compartmentalized, you know, and that it has to be a trend in order to get



acceptance. There have been moments in our career where, you know, the radio stations have said "oh, we're already playing 3 women, we can't play another one", you know. They don't make those judgments on men and I think being a woman has been sometimes just as hard as being gay, as far as like programming of things. In the States, the whole video/MTV world is much different, you know. They're not as diverse over there...

P: As over here, you mean ?

A: Yeah. They tend not be as supportive...they're not supportive of us at all, period. They tend to, I think, be a little more narrow-minded. They've done some really good stuff, I think, with issues of racism, but they haven't tackled the issue of homophobia, you know, and someone needs to.

P: Do you experience that [homophobia] ? Is that something you feel sort of strongly [about] ?

A: Yeah, we experience it. We have pretty good lives though. We haven't suffered as much as a lot of our friends have.

P: Yeah, it seems to me maybe [it's] like the black issue: American MTV perhaps didn't play a lot of black music and now it's full of it and maybe that it does come around. There's this kind of, as we said before, this moniker - I don't know if it actually holds true - "lesbian chic" - whether it's just a fashion statement or whether as, you know, more people come to embrace the kind of music, it'll get better. I don't know. I don't like to ghettoize other people, really.

E: Yeah, I think over time...it's like civil rights as well. It's a long struggle. Things have gotten better but they're not anywhere near where they should be. Hopefully, the ultimate goal is that sexuality is not even considered and it's not even an issue, you know. It's more the human community. That's the ultimate.

P: And I guess for you guys, you make music first I suppose [laughs]. That's the first thing.

E: I don't sit down to write a song and think "oh, I'm a gay songwriter" or thinking about my sexuality. It's, like, \*me\*, which makes it so absurd when it keeps coming up again and again and again sometimes, but there's still a lot of work to be done in the movement.

A: It's important in the movement, I think, with where the movement is, for people to recognize their sexuality. I don't want to ghettoize or label or put something in compartments, but when you have a movement going on, you need to recognize that there's a movement and be part of it, I believe, because there's a lot of people that have suffered so that we can just be here, you know, and be who we are. You know, it's real easy to be lesbian chic when you're in a cosmopolitan setting, but go to, you know, go to South Alabama and be lesbian chic. You can't do it, you know. That's when you say maybe you're not gay. That's when you drop all the trendiness and you decide to hide, you know. The point is if you're gay, you're gay all the way through, you know. I'm not saying you can't be bisexual, but if you have those tendencies, you have them and you have to live that your whole life, you know. You can't just live it in cosmopolitan, you've got to live it everywhere.

P: Thanks a million for coming onto the show...very glad to meet you.

E: Well, we got into that, didn't we ? [laughs]

P: We certainly did. That's good.

A: You can always go on with politics ! [laughs]

P: We didn't think we would, but we did. Have a great time at Glastonbury. I hope it rounds off whatever's happening at the moment.

E: Thanks a lot.

## From HUH! Magazine:

### Article for HUH! Magazine

I feel like a snake that just crawled out of it's [sic] skin. I've been on a month long tour called "Honor the Earth" in support of front line Native groups working for the defense of homelands and ecosystems, the protection of sacred sites, and the building of sustainable communities. The Honor the Earth tour was such a riveting experience and was so successful that we are planning to make it a part of every Indigo Girls touring season. We played 15 cities, 4 reservations and one Native Alaskan community. We participated in a public hearing and 7 press conferences. When it was over, we had raised over 300 thousand dollars, passed out 40 thousand information booklets and supplied over 100 thousand political action post cards. The tour was sponsored by the Indigenous Women's Network and the Seventh Generation Fund. The IWN is a network of more than 400 grassroots activists and organizations. The Seventh Generation Fund is a Native controlled private foundation that supports Native American environmental, social justice and cultural organizations. Our political guru for the tour was Winona LaDuke. Winona sits on the board of Greenpeace, is co-chair of the Indigenous Women's Network and is the founder of the White Earth Land Recovery Project. She resides on the White Earth Reservation in northern Minnesota. Winona was a constant source of inspiration and energy, with her nightly opening speeches and her patience in fielding our persistent questions. Our promoter and tour coordinator, Mark Tilsen, proved to be our resident expert on Indian policy. Mark and his family have a long history of Indian activism. He spent his formative years on the Pine Ridge Reservation (Lakota Territory) in South Dakota and was at the 1973 stand-off at Wounded Knee, an event which inspired Mark and his comrades to start KILI Radio - Voice of the Lakota Nation - one of the largest Native run radio stations in the country. His company, Direct Expressions, is recently responsible for raising funds to build the first public library on the Pine Ridge Reservation. The other Native activists in our entourage were just as dedicated and inspiring. As the tour progressed, with each new meeting of a tribal member or an activist, my spiritual community grew, until I felt my soul stretched across the nations like the skin on a drum - my heart pounding out - I'd Been Saved!

Native environmental activism demands vulnerability, the spiritual connections are the root. This is what defines the movement and this is what makes it a success. The traditional indigenous people of an area are naturally bonded with their area. They see the elements of an ecosystem

as organs of a living body. Their world is an animate world. Harmony rather than dominance defines their basic value system and ecological philosophy. As colonists, we have been taught to view land in terms of frontiers filled with unlimited resources to exploit. The corporate mind calls a forest "timber" and ignores the life sustained by that forest. Traditional indigenous people depend on the land for food, shelter and their cultural and religious practices. They have a vested interest in maintaining the health of their ecosystem because they are a part of it. As a non-Indian, I believe we can learn from the Native approach to environmentalism.

I have a notebook full of information on Native environmental issues, it's divided by subject matter, but really the whole book could be titled "Environmental Racism". I wish I could give a copy to everyone I meet. Federal governments along with major corporations are mining, clear cutting and dumping toxic waste all over Indian land. Can you imagine someone proposing a nuclear waste dump adjacent to your residence - you'll be the first one writing letters...heh? Get this - the Lubicon Cree of Northern Alberta, Canada, are a small nation (500 people) who have lived off the land north of the Peace River for thousands of years. Oil was discovered there in the 1950's and 400 wells have been drilled in the last two decades. The affects [sic] on their traditional subsistence based lifestyle has been devastating. While in 1980 5% of the Lubicon people were on welfare, just 4 years later 90% required welfare. It gets worse... in 1988 the Alberta government sold 12,000 square miles of timber cutting rights to Daishowa Manufacturing Co, who built a pulp and paper mill at Peace River. Now, the Lubicon Crees are faced with the construction of a sour gas plant by UNOCAL adjacent to and upwind of the Lubicon village. All this destruction to a nation of 500 people who never signed a treaty with the Candian government and under Canadian and international law should still retain control of their ancestral land.

It's hard enough to battle racism from corporations and federal governments, but Native environmentalists also experience racism from mainstream non-Indian environmental groups. I learned about this absurdity at a press conference with Native Action in Bozeman, MT. One of Native Action's campaigns is working to preserve the Sweet Grass Hills, a sacred site of the Northern Great Plains tribe, from gold mining. As an idealist, I thought all environmentalists had the same basic goals and interests. No way! It is rare for mainstream environmental groups to focus on indigenous environmental concerns much less have any indigenous people on their boards. Most of these groups are out saving the Earth so we can hike around, go mountain biking, have a picnic or show our kids

what a moose looks like; as opposed to the Native communities that depend on the land for their survival and spiritual practices. These mainstream groups don't even consider protecting sacred sites because then we couldn't use them for our recreation. Also, Indian sovereignty is a point of conflict because mainstream environmental groups want to retain control and they don't respect the fact that Indians know how to take care of the land they've lived on for thousands of years. For example - while visiting the White Earth reservation in northern Minnesota, I learned that the White Earth Land Recovery Project is currently engaged in a struggle to retain tribal management of the Tamarack National Wildlife Refuge. This land originally belonged to the tribe, but is now controlled by the National Fish and Wildlife Commission. The Sierra Club gave a definite NO to supporting tribal management of the Refuge, but who better to manage the land than the people who subsist on it? There are some enlightened mainstream groups such as Greenpeace. Greenpeace has indigenous board members and is on the forefront of many Native environmental issues.

It's unbelievable what the Federal Government has done to the Indians. First we come in like gangsters, rude and violent, take what we want (to Hell with who we hurt), make a bunch of treaties then break every one of them. And then, because we are being lazy and close-minded, we impose an easily exploitable form of government and economic system on all the tribes - not taking into account diversity in language, culture or leadership. We can't deal with traditional Native leadership and culture - it's too spiritual, too subjective, it makes us feel too vulnerable. So, we relocate and reconfigure a culture that, if left alone could help us save ourselves from ultimate destruction. Let's look at an example of how our government's policies affect the Indians. In Alaska, rather than create reservations, the Federal Government decided to impose a system called ANCSA (Alaskan Native Claims Settlement Act) which would put into place "Native owned" corporations who would handle the land and resources of the community. This system would encourage "modernization and economic development" rather than traditional subsistence based lifestyles. Native Alaskans were given one billion dollars and 44 million acres, about 1/10 of the state, to handle through these corporations. Keep in mind that the US never legally owned Alaskan land, so they actually stole that other 90%. One such corporation, the EYAK corporation, has a board of directors made up of only 10% Eyak Natives. So decisions made about the Native Eyak community are made by mostly non-Eyaks and a lot of people who don't even live in the area. How much difference does that make? First the Eyak rain forest gets pummeled by the Exxon Valdez oil spill and then

the corporation wants to sell their timber rights and clear cut the land. I stood in a circle of 15 people on a boat in Prince William Sound praying as logs were ripped out of the earth, wondering where are 300 Eyak Natives gonna go? What if I only had 300 people left in my tribe, and someone was giving away my lifeline...? If all the responsibility seems to fall before your time... remember who you voted for in the last few elections. Did they support NAFTA or GATT? Now, look into what those agreements really mean to indigenous people - it's not a pretty sight.

So, where's the hope you ask. Actually, there is hope. Much of what the grassroots Native environmental groups do is a success. What they lack in operating budgets, they make up for with solid and courageous political strategies and a lot of commitment. Out of 100 proposed nuclear sites in the last few years, 98 have been defeated. On the Hopi Reservation, solar power is being installed in many Hopi dwellings by the Native owned Hope Solar Foundation. The Lakota people (second poorest country in the nation, with an average annual income of \$3,700) have stood up against the US Government and refused money for the Sacred Black Hills. A treaty in 1868 guaranteed this land to the Lakota nation for "as long as the grass grows" and they intend to keep it. When we gave a concert at Jemez Pueblo, the Native American Youth Empowerment Group performed for us, and gave me hope for the future leaders of the Native peoples. As non-Indians we can help by getting involved and showing support. Make an effort to get to know different Indian nations and their cultures. Because we have mythologised Indians, it's hard not to feel a barrier; I felt one myself until I started asking questions. So go out and get to know your neighbors. Vote your conscience, write letters, be an informed consumer, subscribe to enlightened environmental publications, surf the net, be a world citizen. And the next time you turn on your lights, remember that someone's place of worship or food gathering area might have been bulldozed for that electricity. Don't let the guilt hold you down, let the knowledge empower you.

Megwitch (thanks)

Amy Ray

**Channel 4 Teletext, England, July 3, 1995:**

**Indigo Girls "4.5"**

A wonderful "Best Of" compilation from an underrated American folk duo. The 15-track collection culls from their four LPs released between 1989 and 1994 and is a great introduction to their work. Best bits? The whole lot really, but especially "Ghost." Rating: 5 out of 5

**Big Issue, England, unknown date:**

Indigo Girls  
4.5 The Best of

Imagine Michelle Shocked, Suzanne Vega and Everything But the Girl cruising down the M5 with Automatic for the People on the stereo, and you have a fair idea of the music of Emily Saliers and Amy Ray. Gritty vocals, honeyed, heart-stopping harmonies and cracking folk-tinged tunes are their hallmark.

This 15-track collection dips into the Girls' four albums recorded between '89 and '94. Best of the bunch are the melancholy beauty of "Kid Fears" (featuring Michael Stipe), the crisp warm strumming of "Tried to be True" (featuring the rest of REM) and, probably their best known single to date, "Closer To Fine" (featuring the Hothouse Flowers). But this now.