

# Concert Preview

## The Indigo Girls

by Michelle Thomas

When the Indigo Girls (Amy Ray and Emily Saliers) hit paydirt in 1989 with their self-titled major-label debut album after years of playing clubs in their native Georgia, their success was attributed to the outbreak of women singer/songwriters such as Suzanne Vega and Tracy Chapman. However, the Indigo Girls don't have the overt political bent of musicians like Chapman nor the abstract appeal of others like Vega. Their messages are a bit more subtle, a bit more personal.

The Indigo Girls' first album, *Strange Fire*, (which was recently re-released on the major label Epic), dealt mostly with spirituality and the search for meaning in life. Songs such as "Strange Fire" and "Hey Jesus" were almost prayerful in their sense of urgency to fill voids within themselves.

The recent *Indigo Girls* album covered more of the same territory. Their first big hit, "Closer to Fine," described a search for identity, as did "Kid Fears." Pleas to lost loves were sung in "Blood and Fire" and "Tried to be True."

### Queer Nation (from page 16)

assumes me to be straight, she or he needs to be corrected. But alas, everybody's Queer friend can I not be.

I'm baffled. I'm overwhelmed. I cannot be the same thing to everyone. If I'm too conciliatory, I get flack. If I'm too extreme, I get flack. I used to be able to deal with it. Way back before I reached out into the world of gay activism, *I was always right*. I was an extremist who would do everything short of getting arrested. I was naive. I was idealistic. I was having fantasies about what I'd do in a world that I hadn't even seen yet. Dream on, young muthafucker...

### Lend me your Quears

And so here I am. Waltham, Massachusetts. October break. Once again, I'm exiled from my home country. Upon my return, my people will flood into the streets and we'll have a Queer Nation.

But because no one can agree with anyone any more, it'll be a nation of one. And I'll look down the street to see the 23,999,999 other nations flying their flags of shame or pride, hatred or forgiveness. And, as always, I'll hold my head in my hands and wonder why.

It was their emphasis on the down side of life that prompted *Rolling Stone* magazine to complain about the "negative outlook" of their songs. However, the Indigo Girls' most recent effort, *Nomads, Indians, Saints*, shows a tendency toward a more global approach on their part and is almost optimistic in the way it portrays their lives and their own relation to the rest of the world.

The first song on the album, which has been getting a lot of airplay recently in this area, is "Hammer and Nail," in which the Girls sing "Now I know a refuge never grows/from a chin in a hand in a thoughtful pose/got to tend the earth if you want a rose." Or this from "World Faces:" "This world faces on me with hopes of immortality/Everywhere I turn all the beauty just keeps shaking me/I woke up in the middle of a dream, scared the world was too much for me/Sjarez said, 'Don't let go, just plant the seeds and let them grow.'"

Even a loss of love has this ray of hope in "Hand Me Downs," where they sing "Give me hope that emptiness brings fullness and loss of love brings wholeness to us all."

This optimism is tempered in typical Indigo Girls fashion. "Hammer and Nail" has an answer song on the album in "Girl with the Weight of the World in her Hands," which is about a girl who seems less concerned about her own life than that of everyone else: "But if things didn't get any harder/she might miss her chance to go a consecrated martyr." "123" is a call to arms of sorts, one of their trademark songs of urgency: "Here's a chance to make a choice; are you aware of the fire beneath your feet?"

Another thing typical about this album is the excellent production. Their first album was pretty much Amy and Emily and their guitars. For *Indigo Girls*, a band was added which featured a few friends from REM and Hothouse Flowers. But even with higher production values, the intimacy the Indigo Girls have with audience is not lost.

The same can be said for *Nomads, Indians, Saints*. The power of their songs and the virtuosity of their singing and playing overshadows anything else. The Indigo Girls have something to say to us, and nothing will prevent them from completely baring their souls in song.



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