

MUSIC

REVIEWS



ALL THAT WE LET IN
Indigo Girls • Sony

The Indigo Girls sound hasn't changed much in the 20-plus years the duo have been together, and that's a good thing. Like a bowl of your mom's chicken noodle soup, the Indigo Girls are comfort food that doesn't need to be improved upon.

On the past few albums, Amy Ray's songwriting has overpowered Emily Saliers', which has been pasty white. What a nice surprise on *All That We Let In* that Saliers, author of the classics "Power of Two" and "Closer to Fine," finally has her songwriting power back.

Ray's songs tend to ask the unanswerable questions. Saliers' give us answers and hope. Especially strong is the title song, a muse on predictable Indigo topics: love and war. Ray asks: "Can we make it better? Do we tether the hawk or do we tether the dove?" Saliers states

emphatically, "We're better off for all that we let in."

The two have grown in different musical directions, Saliers favoring the ballad and Ray branching off to collaborate with punk bands on her solo efforts. But on this album, as with all that have come before, it's the blending of voices, strong writing and politics that makes the Indigo Girls greater than the sum of its parts.

—Kathy Belge

LUCKY
Melissa Etheridge • Island Records

Let me start by saying I'm a huge Melissa Etheridge fan. I've bought all her albums, seen her in concert dozens of times, read her book, joined her fan club.

I rushed to buy *Lucky* the day it came out and popped it into my car stereo. My heart started to race as I heard the first distinctive guitar licks. Then she opened her mouth.

At 40-something, Etheridge's voice is as strong and rich as ever. Her problem is lyrical. It just gets annoying listening to her rhyme words like notion, ocean and emotion. She has always overused certain terms, such as "angel," for instance, from "The Angels Won't Have It" to "I've Been Talking to My Angel" and now "I



want to ride with my angel and live shockingly." The woman needs to ditch her rhyming dictionary and pick up a good thesaurus.

"I want to see how lucky, lucky can be," Etheridge opines. My 10-year-old niece writes better songs. The album's best offering, "Home," was not written by Etheridge.

To the dyke icon's credit, lesbianism is creeping more overtly into her music. "Meet Me in the Dark" is a

strong ballad about life in the closet, and in "Giant" she deservedly credits herself with some of the progress of the modern gay rights movement. But, her earnest tribute to gay 9/11 hero Mark Bingham falls a little too short, too late.

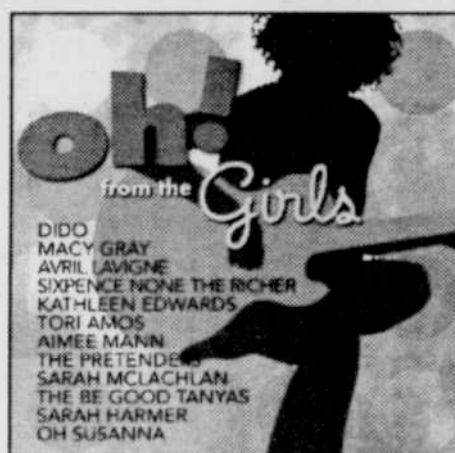
Etheridge is newly in love, and that's what this album is really about. Unfortunately for us, her real songwriting talent lies in heartbreak.

—KB

OH! FROM THE GIRLS
Various Artists • Nettwerk

Oh! From the Girls, the latest showcase of women in music, does a fairly good job at spanning genres (pop, rock, folk) and artists from mainstream biggies (Dido, Avril Lavigne, The Pretenders) to lesser-known indies (Sarah Harmer, Oh Susanna, Martina Sorbara).

All recordings were pulled from existing



material, except for Macy Gray's "Come Together" and Tori Amos' "Cornflake Girl," both from live performances.

Part of the proceeds from sales of the album go to Oh! Get the Money, an organization of Oxygen Media company that helps women

entrepreneurs start their own businesses.

Hopefully these entrepreneurs will know how to put together a better CD. *Oh!* exhibits little variation in its mood, which is mellow in an unsatisfying kind of way. Combining the chosen artists with more lively songs could have produced an edgier compilation, but, as too often is the case, the balance is tipped in favor of less character and less dare.

The Be Good Tanyas' calm but mesmerizing "It's Not Happening" and Stacie Orrico's rocking "Stuck" are good examples of more spirit. But then Sixpence None the Richer's cover of "Don't Dream It's Over" is a strange choice considering the band's many powerful songs. And why flaunt Amos' overdone "Cornflake" when she cuts right through the heart with unearthly songs like "Precious Things"?

Similarly, Erin McKeown's fine "Slung-Lo" does not magnetize like, say, her opulent "The Taste of You." And Sarah McLachlan's "Angel" pushes you right over the languid edge.

—Els Debbaut

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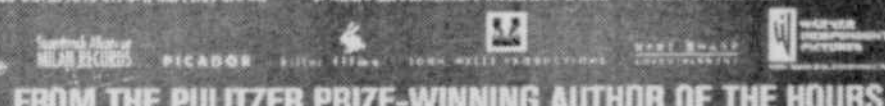
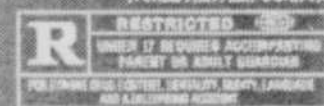
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