

Poetry and politics with the Indigo Girls

By Kim Wyatt

STATELINE – Indigo Girls Amy Ray and Emily Saliers played a tight 22-song set at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe showroom March 24 to a full, devoted house. Lyrically rich songs of self-discovery and political anthems spanning 30 years of songwriting punctuated the intermission-free 90-minute show, and by the end an inspired crowd was on its feet.

The Georgia-based duo showcased a mix of tunes old and new from their folk/rock catalog. Violinist Lyris Hung added spice to a full quiver of stringed instruments: acoustic and electric guitar, banjo, mandolin and dulcimer were switched up in between most songs by guitar wrangler Aron Michalski who seamlessly delivered the right tools at the right time.



The Indigo Girls play to an appreciative crowd March 24 at Harrah’s Lake Tahoe. Photo/Lotte Colbert

Almost 30 years after their eponymous breakout "Indigo Girls" Ray and Saliers are still working out their lives in song. There is something comforting about seeing a band that carries on, that shows up, that does its job and we are richer for it, the benefactors of life lessons and heartbreak. The world has been a rough place lately, and the Indigo Girls, wielding focus and sincerity, healed some Tahoe folks with their specific alchemy.

With Ray on the mandolin, the reflective toe-tapper "Yield" from their 2002 release "Become You" kicked off the show, followed by "It's Alright" and "Three Hits," featuring Ray's powerful vocals. Ray's tunes have a harder edge than Saliers', but this only complements their body of work: Ray deals in injustice, Saliers in metaphor and unrequited love—together, they lay it all out there and then make us feel like we're going to be OK.

The Indigo Girls are known for activism—they co-created the nonprofit Honor the Earth with Winona LaDuke—but rather than banter about their political causes they let the music speak for itself. Ray-penned songs "Go" and "Shame on You" packed spark and power, the latter featuring the crowd-pleasing line, "They say we be looking for illegal immigrants can we check your car/I say you know it's funny I think we were on the same boat back in 1694." From their latest album, "One Lost Day" they offered "The Rise of the Black Messiah," a song Ray wrote about a member of the Angola 3 still in solitary confinement. Just as the weight of the world began to sink in, the Saliers' tune "Power of Two" made it all a little less scary; although her voice was worn, the harmonies carried the night.

The show ended with "Galileo," and the audience remained on its feet for a two-song encore of "Share the Moon" and "Closer to Fine." The mixed crowd—women and men, young and old, and everyone in-between—knew all the words. After a week of political chaos, it was good to be at a singalong. Anytime you need a righteous pick-me-up, the Indigo Girls are there.

*Kim Wyatt is the owner of **Bona Fide Books** in Meyers.*