

ENTERTAINER OF THE YEAR

Dixie Chicks

The Dixie Chicks keep making history. No group or duo in the 33-year span of the CMA Awards has won the coveted Horizon Award and then, a scant year later, been nominated for the prestigious top prize, Entertainer of the Year.

Not, that is, until the Dixie Chicks did it. But the Texas trio – Natalie Maines, Emily Robison and Martie Seidel – didn't stop there. They also snagged nominations for Vocal Group of the Year and their hit "Wide Open Spaces" got nods for

Single and Music Video of the Year.

Any way you slice it, it's been a banner year for the Chicks. Their debut album, *Wide Open Spaces*, with sales of 6 million and counting, is already the best-selling album of all time by a country group or duo. The barnburner is fueled by three No. 1s – "There's Your

Trouble," "You Were Mine" and the title track – and two Top 10s, "I Can Love You Better" and "Tonight the Heartache's on Me."

Their latest single, "Ready To Run," the debut song from their new album, *Fly*, and also included on the *Runaway Bride* movie soundtrack, is already trekking to the top of the charts.

They've also been red-hot on the road, too – with George Strait, Tim McGraw and in their history-making role as the first country act to co-headline the traveling Lilith Fair pop-rock festival.

Martie explains why their music has hit a bull's-eye. "Just about everyone can relate to songs about needing the freedom to chase your dreams or dealing with a broken heart or falling in love or even just wanting to be a little wild and crazy every now and then," she says.

Even with their successes, the Chicks' Emily was speechless when she got the phone call from her publicist about the Entertainer of the Year nomination. After 30 seconds of dead silence, she exclaimed, "Oh, my God! Oh, my God! Oh, my God!" And, finally, "I need to digest this further – I'll call you back."

A few moments later a much calmer Emily called back and declared, "It's pretty surprising that we would be nominated for this award so soon. It's thrilling that the industry has enough faith in us to recognize us in *this* category."

The Chicks reveal they're also thrilled that their hit records have taken them out of flea-bitten hotels. "We'd all three stay in the same room and flip a coin to see who'd sleep with Emily, because she's a cover hog," jokes Natalie. "Even when we got our own rooms we were still in sleazy motels – the kind that have the little machine by the bed to drop quarters in and make the bed shake."

And now? "We get a lot of perks now that we didn't get before," confides Natalie, "but I don't think money is important to any of us. None of us have made any extravagant purchases. Where I used to have to count my money all the time, now I know I can eat the \$5 M&M's out of the hotel minibar and it's OK."

— Larry Holden

