

REFUELED

After a messy legal dispute, the Dixie Chicks are ready to fly – again

Blue skies are back for the Dixie Chicks. Following a year's worth of tugging and clawing with their record label, the mega-selling trio – Natalie Maines, Emily Robison and Martie Maguire – is again doing what it does best: making music.

The Chicks are already riding the charts with their new song, "Long Time Gone," which they premiered on the VH1 special *Divas Las Vegas* in mid-May.

And they're announcing even more exciting news – their first new album in three years, *Home*, is set for an August 27 release. *Home* will feature "Long Time Gone," "Travelin' Soldier" (which they performed to much acclaim on last year's CMA Awards telecast), a tune written by Radney Foster and much more.

Lead vocalist Natalie recalls that she and her bandmates originally went into the studio to make some demo recordings – but came out with an entire album instead. "It's a mellow record," reveals Natalie. "And Martie and Emily's instruments never sounded better."

But *where* any new music from the Chicks would eventually nest was anyone's guess, until recently. The guessing game was sparked by the lawsuit the band filed last year against their record label, Sony Music, seeking to recover what they claimed were unpaid royalties from their songs. The Chicks were also asking to be freed from their recording contract.

The disagreements aren't completely settled, but things are ironed out enough for the band to be back in business. They kicked off their return by thrilling a huge TV audience with their feisty VH1 *Divas Las Vegas* performance, which included their smash "Wide Open Spaces" and a medley of Elvis Presley tunes. They also recently teamed with the legendary Willie Nelson for a rendition of "Bloody Mary Morning" on the *Willie Nelson & Friends: Stars & Guitars* TV special.

And there's even more happy news to sing about. Emily, the band's guitar and banjo wizard, has just announced that she and husband Charlie Robison are expecting their first child in November. "I don't know much about it, other than it likes to eat," says Emily with a laugh. "That's about it."

As early as last year, Emily declared, "Charlie and I are trying to have a baby. I'm more than ready, and things are in nature's hands."

And nature certainly came through, as Emily now joins Natalie in the new mom parade. Natalie and her hubby, actor Adrian Pasdar, celebrated the first birthday of their son Slade this past March.

"We're *all* very happy!" Natalie exclaims.

And why not? With new music, a new Chicklet on the way and a renewed lease on their recording life, the Dixie Chicks are flapping their wings – ready to soar once again.



Viva Divas: The Chicks got back in business by strutting their stuff on the VH1 *Divas Las Vegas* special, where Emily, Natalie and Martie debuted their new single and bounced to an Elvis medley (right). Backstage, the trio shared grins with fellow Diva Celine Dion, show host Wayne Newton (top) and rock legend Stevie Nicks (above).



— Bob Paxman

