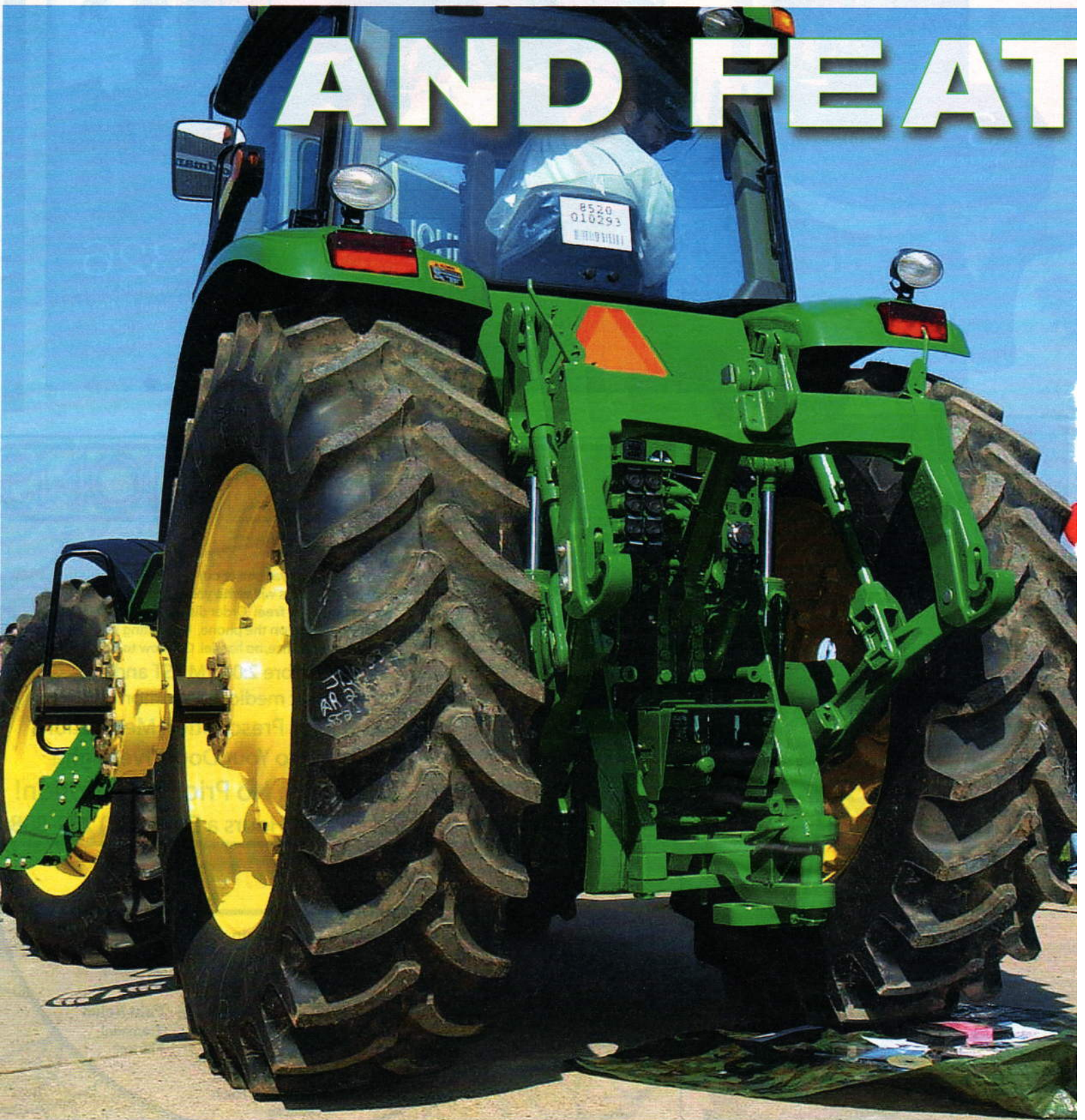


TARRRED

AND FEAT



A Dixie Chick's anti-Bush comment ignites controversy and causes an instant radio and fan backlash. Can the Grammy-winning group recover?

HERE

Radio DJ K.C. Daniels oversees a "Dixie Chicks Destruction" event in Bossier City, La., inviting listeners like 12-year-old Morgan Gardner (right) to throw their Chicks merchandise under the crushing wheels of an American-made John Deere.



AP PHOTO/THE TIMES, ROBERT RUIZ



SONY MUSIC

It's funny how 15 little words can have such a big impact. When the speaker is Dixie Chicks lead singer Natalie Maines, the place is a packed arena in England, the time is just before a war, and the words are, "Just so you know, we're ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas," those little words mean a lot.

Native Texan Natalie's offhand comment was greeted with cheers from the largely anti-war London audience at one of the first shows on the Chicks' Top of the World Tour. Back home, it was a different story. Within a day, the Chicks saw themselves being denounced by country fans, their songs being pulled from radio station playlists and their CDs being destroyed. Word quickly spread about country fans planning demonstrations at various stops of their American tour, which begins May 1 in Greenville, S.C.

"After the story ran, we had so many calls and e-mails that we had to set up a separate phone line just for this topic," says Dave Kelly, program director for WKDF in Nashville. Indeed, radio stations nationwide dealt with a flood of listener outrage.

"Dump that anti-America group," urged one poster to an online message board operated by radio station KMBC in Kansas City. "Obviously this group intends to give aid and comfort to a known killer of the innocent. Let them go give a concert in Baghdad."

The following day, Natalie released a statement responding to the uproar — but it turned out to be an explanation,



AP PHOTO/THE TIMES, ROBERT RUIZ

not an apology. "We've been overseas for several weeks, and have been reading and following the news accounts of our governments' position," she said. "The anti-American sentiment that has

Story by Chris Neal and Bob Paxman

