

SPECIAL SECTION: YOUR GUIDE TO THE CMA AWARDS

COUNTRY

W E E K L Y

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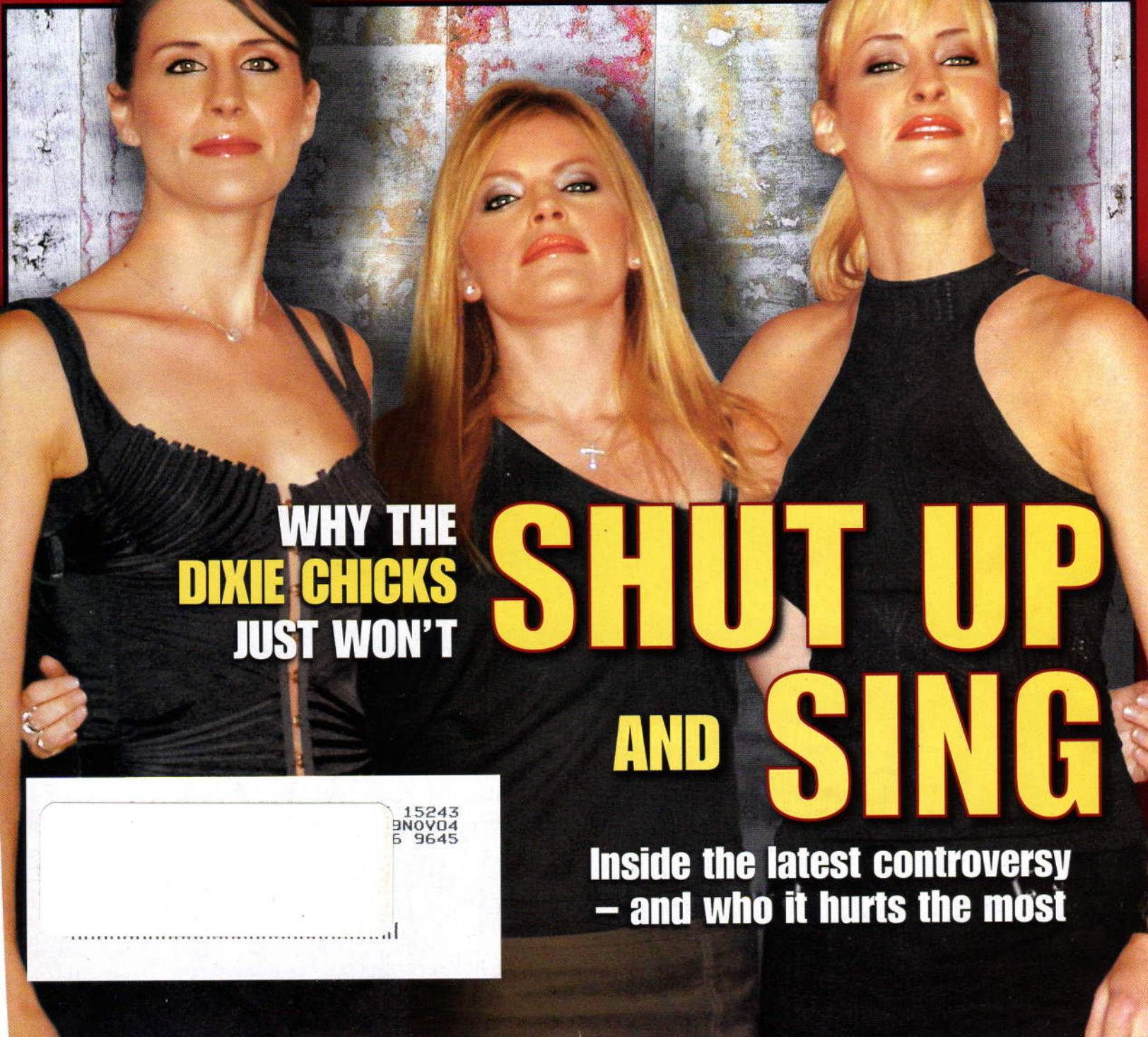
Where's FAITH?

18 STAR PACKED PAGES!

Can MARTINA be beat?

Shut out SHANIA!

TOBY vs. ALAN!



WHY THE DIXIE CHICKS JUST WON'T

SHUT UP AND SING

Inside the latest controversy — and who it hurts the most

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Bitter antiwar statements . . . a stormy feud with a fellow superstar . . . posing nude for a magazine cover. And now, another bombshell. The irrepressible **DIXIE CHICKS** can't seem to stop causing trouble. Will country fans finally decide enough is enough?

THINGS HAD BEEN CALM. Over the summer, the hot trail of controversy following the Dixie Chicks seemed to have cooled down. They had a major, successful and thankfully uneventful tour of the United States, with virtually no organized boycotts or even protests, and certainly no acts of physical violence – at one time, a very real threat – directed their way. Superstar hitmaker Toby Keith called a halt to his ongoing spat with the Chicks' lightning-rod lead singer, Natalie Maines, ending months of escalating public dust-ups. Outrage over the trio's provocatively nude photo on the cover of *Entertainment Weekly* had passed.

Story by Bob Paxman

It seemed like things might be returning – or at least beginning to return – to the tranquility of the relatively blissful time before Natalie opened her mouth on a stage in England and fired a shot at President Bush heard 'round the world.

But with this tempestuous trio, the calm was misleading.

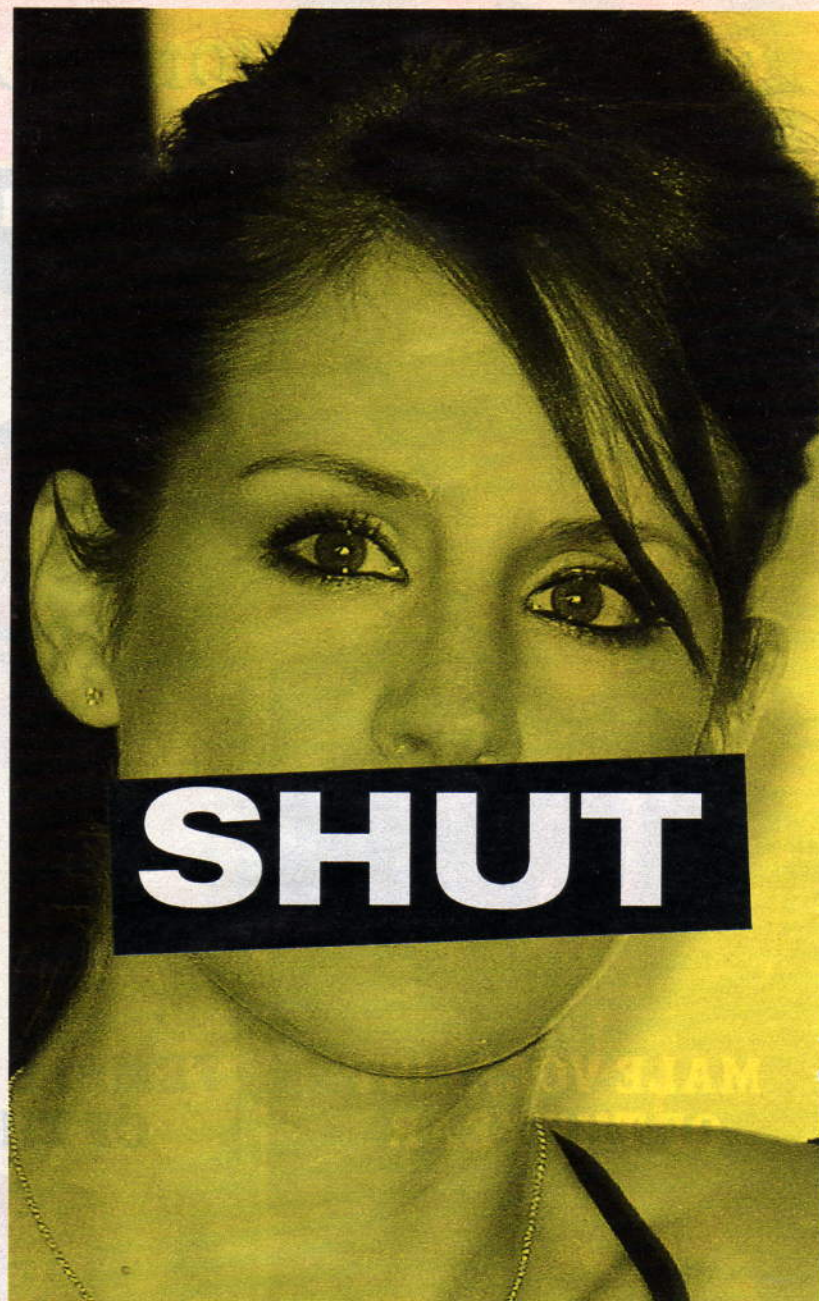
Typically, it was Natalie who tended to stir things up. But the latest salvo came from fiddler Martie Maguire, who shattered the calm in an interview with *Der Spiegel*, a German magazine. She said, or at least appeared to be saying (see sidebar), that the Grammy-winning trio was fed up with country music and ready to jump ship to another musical format – namely, rock 'n' roll.

"I think we don't feel we are part of the country scene," Martie was quoted. "It can't be our home anymore." She referred to the Chicks as now being "part of the larger rock 'n' roll family."

The stateside response was immediate – and if the Chicks were suggesting they were ready to leave country music, there were more than a few country fans who weren't going to try to stop them.

Good riddance, declared their critics, who've never stopped being incensed by Natalie's public drubbing of President Bush while onstage in London back in March. And this latest bombshell, like that one, had been dropped on foreign soil, while the group was on a tour stop in Munich.

"I think this illustrates perfectly the problem that most country listeners have with the Dixie Chicks: their arrogance," noted Dawson McKay of KRST radio in Albuquerque, N.M., about Martie's comments. "They don't get to decide that they're not a part of the country scene any longer – the country music listener [will decide] that for them."



But Martie didn't stop at hinting that the band no longer considered themselves a country act. In the German interview, she also complained that the Chicks had been abandoned by fellow country stars and fair-weather fans, even labeled traitorous by many in the country establishment.

"How can they do that, to tell us we are unpatriotic just because we don't want to send our soldiers into the bloodbath of a war?" she asked. "I love Texas, I love the U.S.A. But the best thing you can do for your country is not to blindly follow your leaders. Besides, when our soldiers were in Iraq, we supported them. We are 100 percent behind them."

She also talked of being booed at the 2003 ACM Awards (which they did not attend) whenever their name was announced as a nominee, compared with their relative success at this year's earlier Grammys. And she seemed to suggest that they felt slighted by receiving only two nominations for the Nov. 5 CMA Awards, a seemingly small acknowledgement of what she considered to be a banner year for the group.

"We had the most successful tour in the country genre this year in

