

Country's FUNKY CHICKENS

When it comes to setting country-music records, the **Dixie Chicks** spent this year making Garth Brooks look like a wheezing old man. Their Monument debut, *Wide Open Spaces*, went double platinum before most of the record-buying public had a chance to ask the trio where it got its name. "From the Little Feat song 'Dixie Chicken,'" explains banjo-playing Emily Erwin. "We called ourselves that and taped rubber chickens to our instruments to get attention, but it seemed silly, so we shortened the name to Chicks." Thankfully, without taping baby *chicks* to their instruments. And that restraint paid off: The Dixies became the first act to win the Country Music Association's Horizon award (for best rookies) *and* Group

of the Year. "It's overwhelming," says Erwin, 26, who performs with her sister, fiddler Martie Seidel, 29, and lead singer Natalie Maines, 24. Erwin and Seidel are hardly rookies, though; the two recorded three albums on an indie label with another singer, a collection Erwin hopes "never surfaces," since "they don't have the pure Dixie Chicks sound." Which is? "Old-time country played with a new sensibility by three blonds is the best I can figure it." —*KT*

