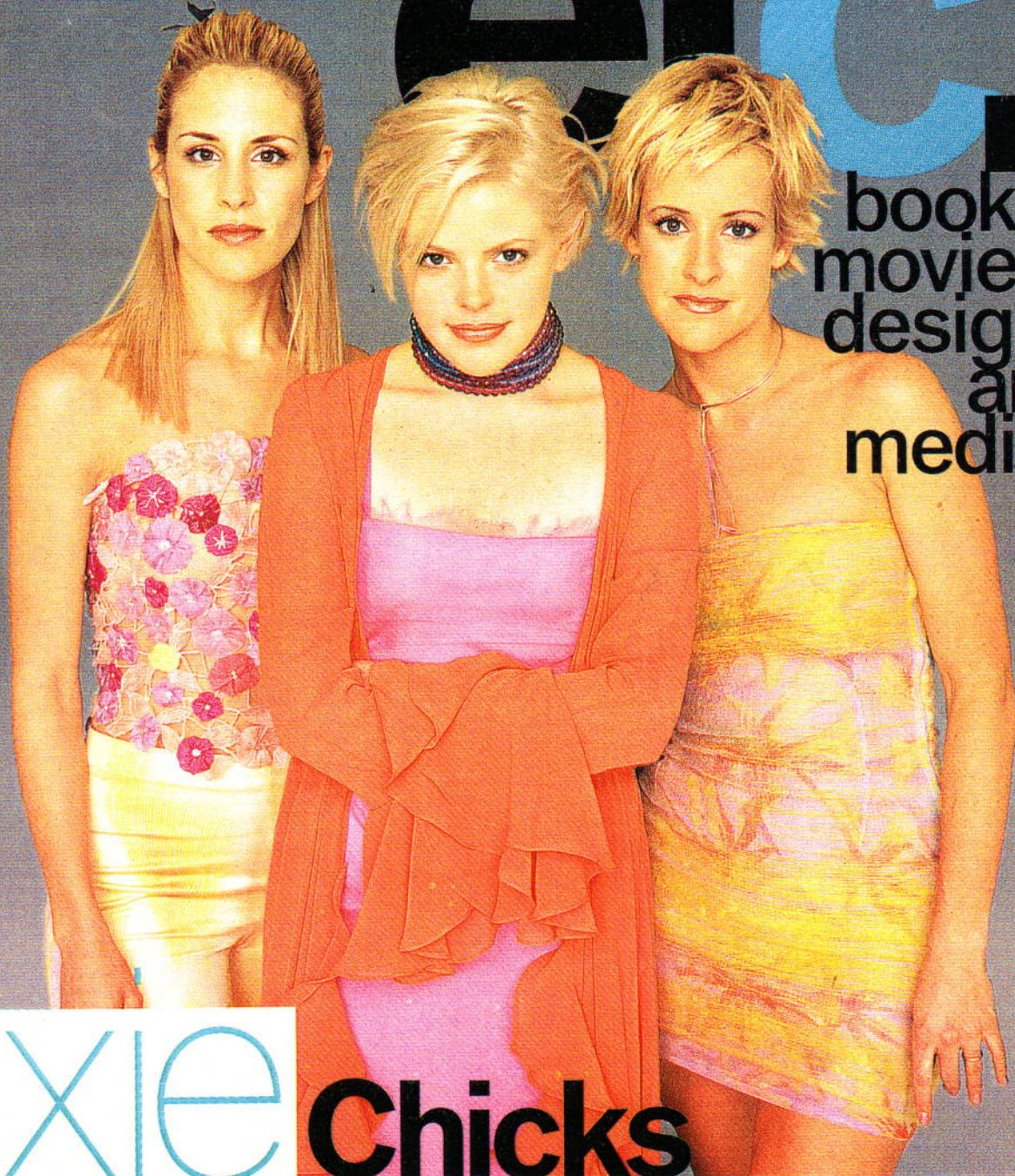


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# Dixie Chicks

**I**t might be tempting to call Dixie Chicks country music's answer to Wilson Phillips, but don't. This red-hot threesome—backup singers Emily Erwin, 26 (left), and Martie Seidel, 29 (right), and lead vocalist Natalie Maines, 24 (center)—doesn't just cross over into the pop world like its country-glam compatriots Shania Twain and Faith Hill. With their big smiles, down-home drawls and full-on country twang, Dixie Chicks are bending the pop world to their will.

The group was started by sisters Seidel and Erwin in 1989, singing at political conventions in Dallas (George W. Bush and Ross Perot were early fans), on street corners and once during halftime at a Dallas Cowboys game. The sib-

lings, who grew up studying classical music during the week and playing the fiddle and the banjo at bluegrass festivals on the weekend, put out three independent albums before hooking up with Maines in 1995 and lassoing a deal with Sony's Monument label. Their latest effort, *Wide Open Spaces*, has gone triple platinum and has won them two Country Music Association Awards, an American Music Award and three Grammy nominations, proving that practice makes perfect. Now these self-described "hard-asses who don't put up with much" just need to get used to all the hoopla. "Two cowboys rushed the stage the other night," Seidel says with a laugh. "It was a neat compliment. Nobody rushes the stage at a country show." —Seven McDonald