

DIXIE CHICKS

HOME

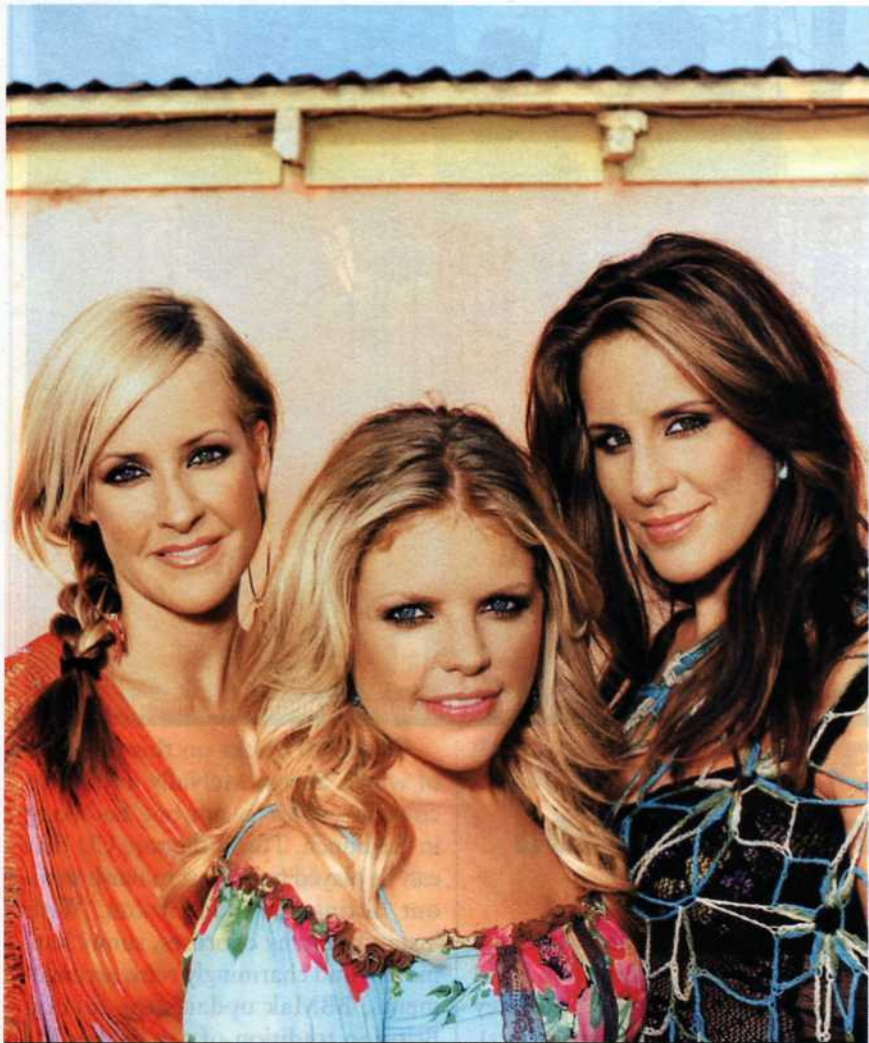
THE NEW ALBUM

IN STORES TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2002



PRODUCED BY THE DIXIE CHICKS & LLOYD MAINES
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Chicks Maguire (left), Maines and Robison paint their latest in shades of bluegrass.

MIHONOR BERRY

Home

Dixie Chicks (Open Wide/Columbia)
Reviewed by Ralph Novak

Few artists were as prepared to jump on the bluegrass bandwagon as the Dixie Chicks, what with Martie Maguire's fiddle, her sister Emily Robison's banjo and their down-home harmonies with lead singer Natalie Maines. On this, the Chicks' follow-up to 1999's 10-million-seller *Fly*, their traditional picking and singing add a rootsy authenticity to numbers such as "Truth No. 2," a Patty Griffin song that boasts a twangy vocal by Maines and nimble banjo playing from Robison. The composing credits also in-

clude such bluegrass stalwarts as Marty Stuart, Radney Foster and Natalie's father, Lloyd Maines, who also coproduced the CD.

Not that this is a clichéd bluegrass project. In fact, the disc is noteworthy for its variety. One of the highlights is the Chicks' introspective version of the 1975 Fleetwood Mac tune "Landslide," complete with Maines's Nicksian vibrato. Another striking track is the eloquent, touching "Travelin' Soldier," a Vietnam-theme song cowritten by splendid singer-composer Bruce Robison, Emily's brother-in-law. And "More Love," a straightforward '60s-style plea for affection, helps enhance the album's warm, personal vibe, making it feel just like *Home*. **Bottom Line:** Chicks still rule the roost

Records are rated on a scale of one (poor) to four (excellent) stars:

Country

DIXIE CHICKS: "Home." Columbia.

★★★^{1/2}

In the music business, there are followers and leaders. In 1998, the Dixie Chicks followed commercial radio with a safe bet called "Wide Open Spaces," which broke wide open on the charts. The following year, they followed with another radio-friendly hit album, "Fly."

In 2002, the Chicks have money, awards, a place in country music history and, now, enough confidence to cut to the front of the pack and lead.

With "Home," the Chicks have broken free of the country-hits cookie-cutter with a homespun jewel recorded literally at home. Produced in Austin by Lloyd Maines, father of lead singer Natalie Maines, it's pure Texas. The banjo and fiddle that flavored their previous pop hits have moved proudly to the front of the mix, nudging the Dixie Chicks nearer to where the grass is blue and the music is as honest as the feelings that inspire it.

It's a gutsy move.

Had this album been their first, Maines, Emily Robison and her sister, Martie Maguire, may never have been signed and certainly would not have found a place on commercial radio. Now, radio has no choice but to follow the monster it created.

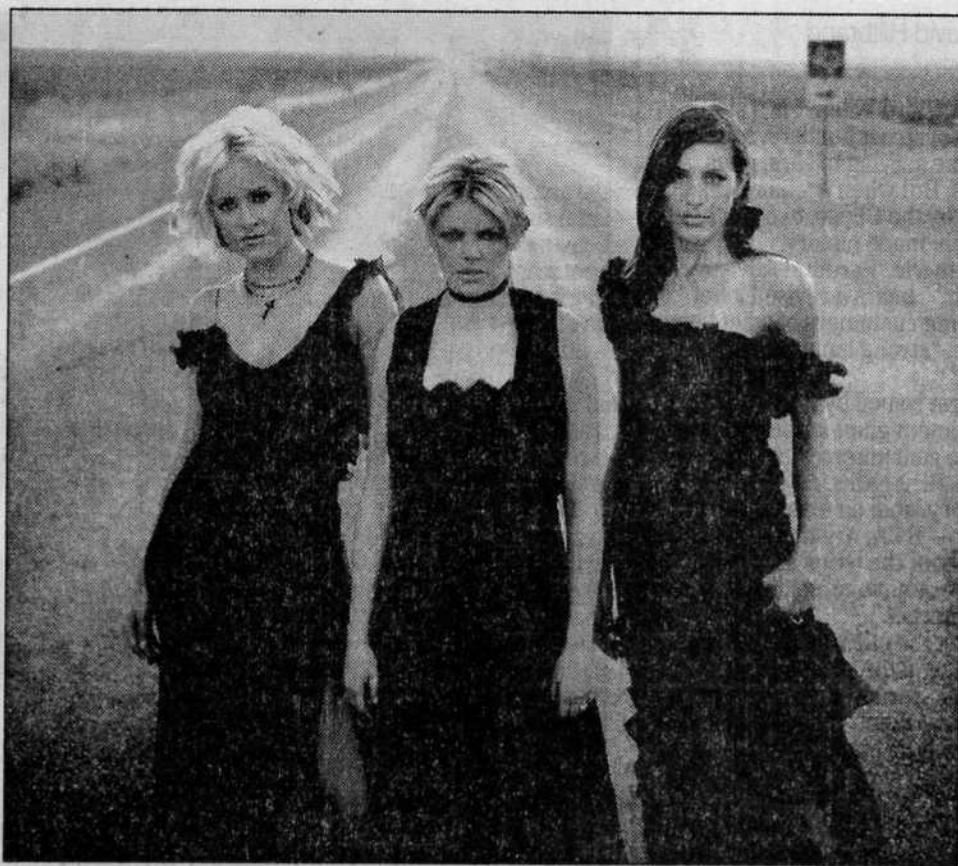
Simple, clean and authentic, "Home" is simply the Chicks' best album to date. The elder Maines embraced what's best about the trio — their sweet voices, intricate harmonies and musical chops — and scrapped the pop stuffing of their past. The Dixie Chicks wrote or co-wrote a third of the songs, including a fun romp called "White Trash Wedding" and the tender "I Believe in Love" with writing partner Marty Stuart.

Darrell Scott, who wrote "Heartbreak Town" for "Fly," came up with the song that is likely to be the new album's first hit, "Long Time Gone," and the Chicks put their imprint on two tunes by master songwriter Patty Griffin. Classic rock fans will recognize Stevie Nicks' "Landslide," but Maines sings it her way, while surrounded by subtle contemporary acoustic twang. Emmylou Harris slips in for a guest vocal on Radney Foster's "Godspeed (Sweet Dreams)."

In a little stone house in the middle of a field near their homes, the Chicks recorded into an ancient console that once belonged to Elvis Presley. Perhaps that accounts for some of "Home's" vibrancy and soul.

The Chicks' sharp left turn into a bluegrass field shows that in addition to the star quality that carried them to the top, they have the courage to lead.

— John Hayes



James Minchin/Associated Press

The Dixie Chicks — from left, Martie Maguire, Natalie Maines and Emily Robison — make their best album to date with "Home."

Reviews



Dixie Chicks

Home

(Open Wide/Monument/Columbia)

The Dixie Chicks' "Long Time Gone" is about the most startling Top 5 hit in quite a while. You could listen to the radio 'til the cows come home and not hear another song that rocks so hard without electric guitars or drums – or gutsy enough to poke at the radio stations that made it a smash: *The music*, sings Natalie Maines, *ain't got no soul*.

There's certainly plenty of soul on *Home*, which more than delivers on the nerve and promise of that amazing hit. "Long Time Gone" should prepare fans for the Chicks' new direction: a return to the acoustic bluegrass sound of their pre-stardom days, with results that are sometimes rousing and often breathtaking.

Natalie and bandmates Emily Robison and Martie Maguire dress these 12 tracks in no more instrumentation than needed, giving the tunes room to shine on their own – and shine they do. "Travelin' Soldier," written by Emily's brother-in-law Bruce Robison, is an almost unbearably sad story of love in wartime. A graceful turn on Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide" fits in well with the album's main themes of maturing and family. And their closing version of Patty Griffin's aching "Top Of The World" – an elegy to the dreams given up for love – may be the most moving six minutes you'll hear all year.

The maturity and wisdom heard here suggest the Chicks have spent the three long years between albums settling into their lives as wives and mothers. (Emily's first child is due in November.) With *Home*, the Dixie Chicks really *do* go home – and they bring us along with them.

— Chris Neal



MORE REVIEWS

with Bob Anthony Jnr



DIXIE CHICKS

Home

MONUMENT/SONY

It's been a few years since the Dixie Chicks released their last album, *Fly*, and there has been plenty of speculation "in between drinks" as to what we could expect from their next album.

Well the wait is over and believe me, it has been worth the wait.

That may sound pretty clichéd but you could be forgiven for thinking that the Chicks had reached a peak and where could they go from their last success.

Home introduces a more sophisticated and perhaps little more "mature" sound from the trio but that's not to say there isn't that element of fun which has won them so many fans around the world.

Musically, it is an "evolution" of their sound and instrumentally, it is superior to their previous two albums.

One thing about the Chicks is that despite all the successes they have enjoyed, they remain true to being a country music

band first and foremost.

That hasn't changed on this album and in fact, there have been reviews that have said it is more "folk" than anything they have done. To some extent that is true but I tend to think it is because they have gone back to the roots of country music rather than folk.

There is probably more bluegrass influences on *Home* than before and the sounds have brought out the best in the trio's harmonies.

The Chicks are a little wiser now, all married and with kids starting to come into their lives, it shows through the lyrics and nature of some of the songs, particularly the slower numbers.

Tracks such as the gentle 'Landslide', the emotive ballad, 'Travelling Soldier', the easy, gentle rhythms of 'A Home', 'More Love' and 'I Believe In Love', the soft lullaby 'Godspeed' and the powerful ballad 'Top Of The World' almost command attention from the listener.

Don't be fooled into thinking the Dixie Chicks have gone all serious - hardly.

It wouldn't be a Dixie Chicks album without a healthy dose of fun and that shines in the opening track and current chart topping single, 'Long Time Gone', the more traditional country sounds of 'Truth No.8', the uptempo bluegrass rhythms of 'White Trash Wedding' (my favourite), 'Tortured', 'Tangled Hearts' and the frantic pace of the bluegrass instrumental 'Lil' Jack Slade'.

If you love your country

music in a "pure" form and not manipulated into something far removed from the more traditional styles, this is an album which should either in your collection now!

