

Dixie Chicks and Korn couldn't be further apart in the pop-music spectrum, and yet a common philosophy has helped both bands get where they are today. "All we were thinking about was playing songs that we wanted to play," says Dixie Chick Natalie Maines. "We feel like our audience. We're listeners as much as pickers." The Chicks started off nearly 10 years ago playing street corners in Dallas. Since then they've gone through several lineup changes, sold more than five million copies of their Grammy-winning *Wide Open Spaces*, recorded its follow-up (due early this fall), and gone on the road with such country legends as Loretta Lynn, Emmylou Harris, and Alan Jackson. But Maines maintains that a close relationship with their fans and making heartfelt music is still what's most important to her and her bandmates, Emily Erwin and Martie Seidel.

Is it weird to be touring with such country legends?

It's strange to find ourselves so high up on the bill in such a short time. Since forever we've been way down the line opening up for some pretty cool people, but way earlier in the day. They probably didn't even know we

were opening up for them. So to be right before Tim [McGraw] and then George Strait—that's awesome. We worry that we're being spoiled by playing for so many thousand people on the George Strait tour. You know, where do you go from there?

Has touring changed much now that you've become a hit band? Or is it pretty much the same old same-old—getting from gig to gig, sound checks, bad food?

Well, it took a while to get the right road manger and the right

[backup] band together. Now I feel like we can finally relax. I don't feel I'm checkin' up on everybody all the time. We have two buses and we have a set—you know, a lot of stuff. I guess from the first single [to now]—before [the people in the audience] were just singing "I Can Love You Better," and now we're going to shows and they're knowing every single song—the album cuts, not just the ones that are on the radio. They know all of them and it's awesome! That's what we always wanted is

to have this big sing-along.

Dixie Chicks have had a big impact on teenage girls—kind of like Madonna, where they're emulating you. Who was your first big role model?

Olivia Newton-John [*chuckles*]
Really?

I went [to see *Grease*] when I was five. I went to the theater about 10 times and saw it. It was awesome. I thought I was Olivia Newton-John. Definitely. Then Madonna, and there are a million others. Now it's more people like Bonnie Raitt and the Indigo Girls



and Patty Griffin—mainly female artists whose voices I really love.

Are you excited about Lillith Fair? It seems like a good opportunity to broaden your audience even more.

That was something we've wanted for a couple of years. It's been like, "Come on, Simon!"—our manager—"We can be on Lillith Fair! Get us on Lillith Fair!" "They don't know who you are." "Just tell 'em we're good!" And so when we got that this year we were so excited. I think a lot of the people on [that bill], they pretty much play guitar and so we're really glad that Martie and Emily are gonna get to play all their instruments.

Is it harder playing bigger venues? Do you miss the small places?

I personally feel the bigger the better. I love the adrenaline rush with that many people, and it touches me to see that many people singing our songs and bein' so happy when we're playin'. You feel like you're reaching them in some way. The more people that we can do that to the better. For me, I think it's gonna take us a little while to learn exactly how to reach that many people on stage, but we're tryin'. —SANDY MASURO