



Natalie Maines,
Emily Robison,
Martie Maguire
(from left)

Dixie Chicks

THESE FORMER STREET BUSKERS WHO ONCE MADE SIXTY-FIVE BUCKS FOR PLAYING AN OIL CONVENTION ARE NOW COUNTRY'S BIGGEST ACT



ONE OF THE BRIGHTEST AND BEST-looking mainstream country acts of the Nineties, the Dixie Chicks—sisters Emily Robison and Martie Maguire, who played in the earliest incarnation of the band, and lead vocalist Natalie Maines—have turned back in the direction of their bluegrass roots on their latest album, *Home*. Don't worry: It also features a Stevie Nicks cover and a song called "White Trash Wedding." The Chicks got their start busking on a Dallas street corner—though from their early teens, Emily and Martie did time as musicians for a brother-and-sister Christian bluegrass band, and prior to that, they watched the Barbara Mandrell show and fought over who had to play Irlene, the dumb sister who couldn't handle an instrument. Shortly before embarking on a tour in support of *Home*, Robison called from her house in Texas.

What was your first concert?

Gladys Knight and the Pips, when I was eight. My first rock concert, with friends, was Poison.

Were you still playing Christian bluegrass then?

Um, yeah, I guess. To me, it seemed normal. I wasn't ashamed of it. At school I'd listen to Madonna and everything else.

What was the downside of playing on the street?

Running into people from high school. You'd see the popular girls downtown shopping, and you're on the street corner playing banjo.

Any strange early gigs?

The very first gig Natalie played with us was a convention for Quaker State oil. We had to dress as saloon girls and sing songs about oil.

They gave you oil songs to sing?

They would take pop songs and change the lyrics to fit the Big Q. There was one song about the "sunrise at the Big Q corral." We had to do all these arm motions. But we got sixty-five bucks and stayed at a nice hotel, so we were like, "This isn't a bad life."

MARK BINELLI

* **Defining Moment**

The crazy-sexy-cool country trio broke through with 1998's "There's Your Trouble," the sweet-sounding but tough-talking hit that blew the rest of country radio off the road.