

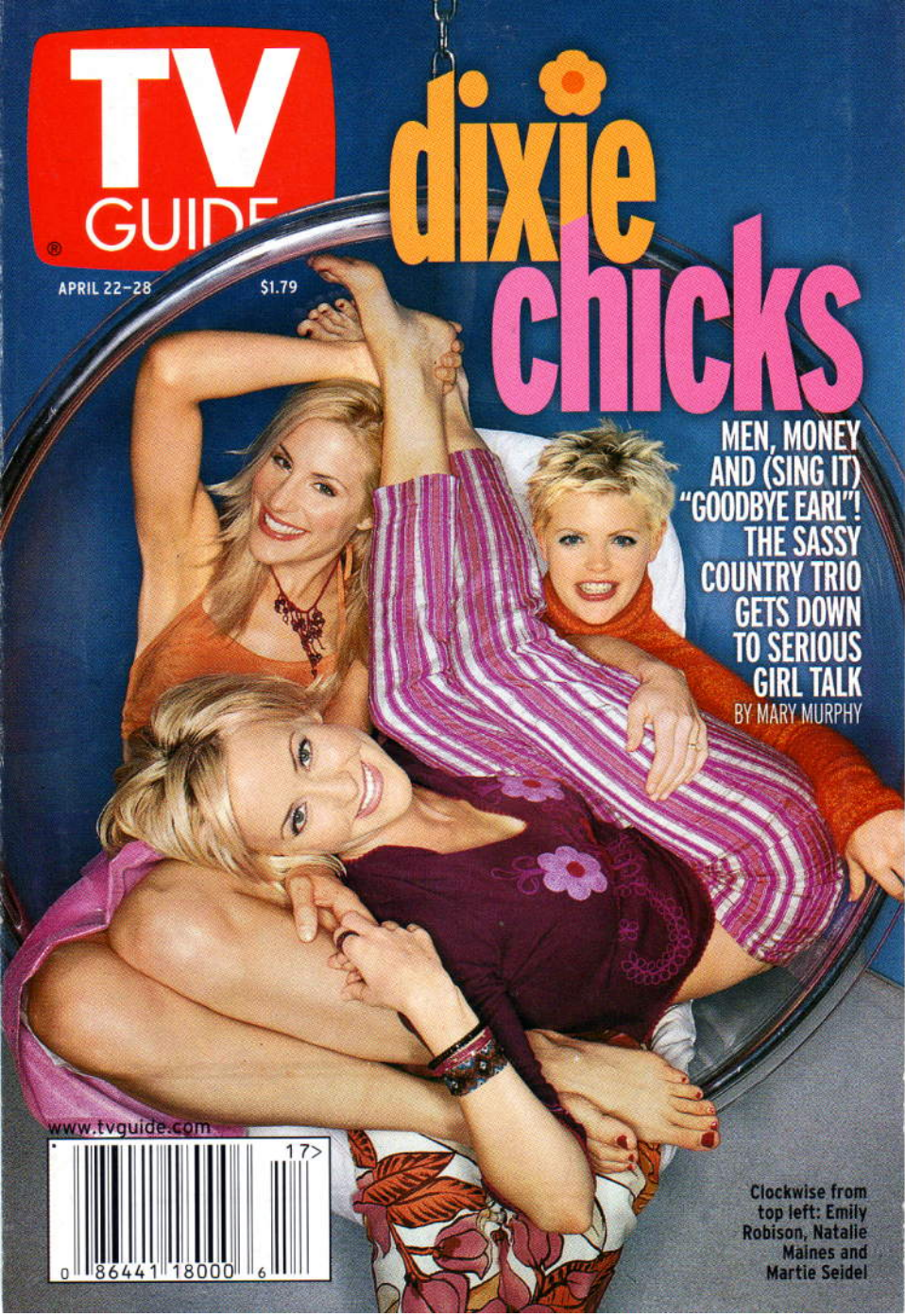
TV
GUIDE

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dixie chicks

**MEN, MONEY
AND (SING IT)
"GOODBYE EARL!"
THE SASSY
COUNTRY TRIO
GETS DOWN
TO SERIOUS
GIRL TALK**
BY MARY MURPHY



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Clockwise from
top left: Emily
Robison, Natalie
Maines and
Martie Seidel

□ The Academy of
Country Music Awards
airs Wednesday, May 3,
8 P.M./ET, on CBS.

THE SAUCY,
SOUTHERN-
FRIED **DIXIE**
CHICKS
DISH ABOUT
LEAVING
HUSBANDS,
PLASTIC
SURGERY AND
STIRRING UP
TROUBLE
WITH "GOOD-
BYE EARL"

HEAR

BY MARY MURPHY



A trio of white Chicks (left to right): Emily Robison, Natalie Maines and Martie Seidel

ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS What a difference five months can make, at least for the Dixie Chicks. When we first met Natalie Maines, Martie Seidel and her sister Emily Robison, they were standing on a rooftop in Los Angeles shooting a video, "Cowboy Take Me Away." At the time, Martie, the oldest, was married to Ted Seidel, a pharmaceutical salesman, while Natalie was going through the breakup of her 18-month marriage to musician Michael Tarrabay. Emily was a newlywed, having married singer-songwriter Charlie Robison in May. Nearing the end of a grueling tour for their latest album, *Fly*, the Chicks were clearly stressed out. What they wanted most was some time off.

Now, the Chicks are back. Energized. In February, *Fly* picked up a Grammy for Best Country Album, and the trio was also honored for Best Country Performance by a group for their single "Ready to Run." Next month they're up for five awards from the Academy of Country Music. And they're getting ready to rock off on a new 72-city tour that starts June 1 in Winnipeg, Canada.

But the last five months have seen more than

just a career turbocharge. **ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS** dressed serious concerns and Martie, 30, divorced her husband. Natalie, 25, **MUSIC AWARDS** playfully stepped on one another's lines. All agreed, as Seidel says, that "we are best friends."

And Emily, 22, changed the dynamic of the blond-on-blond-on-blond infusion of country rock by dyeing her hair brunet. Along the way they released a video, "Goodbye Earl," in which friends (played by Lauren Holly of Chicago Hope and Jane Krakowski of Ally McBeal) serve poisoned black-eyed



Chicks and cast in the "Goodbye Earl" video

peas to an abusive husband (NYPD Blue's Dennis Franz in a black wig). The song's irreverent humor has troubled some listeners, and a scattering of radio stations has refused to play it.

Adding an edge to country is a Dixie Chicks specialty. The group introduced a fresh sound and invigorating new image with their first major-label album, 1998's *Wide Open Spaces*, which sold more than nine million copies. Known at first as the country version of the Spice Girls, they made their mark with their rambunctious, tongue-in-cheek style. And they are no longer strutting in anyone's shadow.

We caught up with them a second time in Nashville, where they talked easily about their new lives. Throughout the interview, they made jokes, ad-

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TV GUIDE: What's new in your lives?

MAINES: I just got Ralph [a bulldog] and moved to Los Angeles near the beach. I have a house in Nashville, too.

SEIDEL: I live wherever the action is.

MAINES: Yeah, she moves a lot. Not her house, but her body.

TVG: Martie, you're single again?

SEIDEL: I was trying to be a good wife. It's just such a struggle because I want to do music 24 hours a day. [Now] I feel like I have that freedom.

TVG: There are rumors you've had some plastic surgery—a boob job?

SEIDEL: [Laughs and shakes her head] I didn't think I needed one.

MAINES: They got bigger naturally.

TVG: Natalie, you got divorced and fell in love with actor Adrian Pasdar. The word is that you want a baby.

MAINES: Ralph's my baby. Print that. And print that my divorce is final. There's all this gossip going around that I'm just a little hussy: not even divorced, a boyfriend, ready to get pregnant. No. Stop the train.

TVG: Emily, it's your first anniversary.

ROBISON: I'm a little scared about the next year, seeing how long we're going to be on the road. But I wouldn't have married him unless I knew we had the capacity to work through this lifestyle.

TVG: How does this new life affect your music?

ROBISON: I think the second album [*Fly*] was a little bit autobiographical in the way it mirrored what we were going through. As things get crazier, we'll probably pick and write songs that reflect that craziness for the next album. Our music always reflects where we are in our lives.

TVG: Martie, now that you are on your own, have you started to date?

SEIDEL: Yes. He lives in England. But

PAUL MATKIN/PHOTO RESERVE, INC.

he's from Ireland. He's a teacher and a soccer player. He plays the tin whistle.

MAINES: Martie wears her heart on her sleeve. [Suddenly, they all stare at Martie's red T-shirt, which has a heart design cut into the front.] Maybe I should say she wears her heart on her "cleave." [Bursts of laughter]

TVG: Is "Earl" a feminist backlash to the O.J. Simpson case?

MAINES: We call it our ode to O.J. Simpson. But we didn't write

The Chicks, including a brunet Robison, nab a Grammy.



it. [Dennis Linde did.] I think initially when we heard it, we just thought it was so funny. We're not saying kill your husband if he touches you. It was more [like], "This is a bad character, and these girls are going to do something really bad to him, but don't take it too seriously."

TVG: Yet it has had some serious impact.

ROBISON: Some stations will play the song and then [cite] the statistics about domestic abuse. And I think that's great.

TVG: Let's talk about your early days. What's the worst gig you ever played?

ROBISON: We were playing this open casket funeral.... They paid us \$100, so we did it. I was probably 17, 18 years old. We sang Bette Midler's "The Rose" with banjos and fiddles.

TVG: People seem to think the Dixie

ACADEMY OF COUNTRY MUSIC AWARDS

Chicks are a single entity. Define the differences.

SEIDEL: I feel responsible for the group's emotional well-being.

TVG: Did you share your troubles with the group while your marriage was ending?

SEIDEL: I wouldn't talk to them about it at first because I really felt like I had to protect them.

MAINES: None of us talked. I didn't talk about [her divorce]. Neither of us talked about our marital problems.

SEIDEL: We are best friends, and we don't want to have to have [one another] worry.

TVG: Emily, you're considered the intellectual one.

ROBISON: I wouldn't say that necessarily. I'm the more pragmatic one.

SEIDEL: It's a hair thing.

ROBISON: Yeah, I'm brunet now, so I've gained a few IQ points.

TVG: Why the change?

ROBISON: It was an experiment on our time off. I thought, "If I'm going to be home, I don't want to have to go to the salon all the time."

MAINES: What's said about me?

TVG: That you come from your gut. **MAINES:** Oh, that's sweet. I got

that from my dad [guitarist Lloyd Maines]. I definitely have strong beliefs. Lots of convictions come from my gut.

TVG: Will you each have your own bus when you tour?

ROBISON: I can't imagine being on my own bus until we have families.... Natalie's designing the bus, and she's designing three different compartments; that can be pretty private.

TVG: What happens if a guy visits?

MAINES: There's a double bed in each.

SEIDEL: And feather mattresses.

MAINES: I can't wait to look around and go, "Oh my God, we made all this. We paid for all this." We may fall off that pedestal and not be able to afford something like this later on, but right now we can. And so we're going to do it our way.