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# Beat

DIXIE CHICKS



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# DIXIE CHICKS

ALL COWGIRL BAND • BUNKHOUSE P.O.B. 670444 • DALLAS, TEXAS 75367-0444

by Pam Porter

Although the Dixie Chicks all hail from the Lone Star State, and their stage attire is classy traditional western, right down to the custom made chaps, the bandmembers are adamant about stressing the fact that they not a bluegrass band. So, how would one classify guitarist Robin Lynn Macy, bassist and yodeler Laura Lynch, banjo player Emily Erwin and swing fiddler Martie Erwin? These acoustic cowgirls have their own natural rural sound and style. And let's not forget their sweet harmonized singing pitched above their melodies. This is what separates the band from the mediocre glut of Texas bands. Robin and Emily sing lead and Martie and Laura sing harmony. Their music ranges from heartfelt love ballads to western gospel swing and includes some of the finest Irish/English jig flat-pickin' I've heard since Steeleye Span.

I met the four ladies that comprise the Dixie Chicks at the 1991 Aquafest and we had a chance to sit down and talk. During the course of our conversation I learned a lot about these women, both personally and musically.

For instance: Laura Lynch, the yodeling standup bassist, was raised on a ranch in Dell City, Texas and graduated from the University of Texas at Austin in 1980. "I grew up with the rodeo, FFA, 4-H, raised steers, roped, and branded." She was formerly a stock broker and has a daughter, Asia Abraham, age 10.

Guitarist/vocalist Robin Lynn Macy was born in Sunnyvale, California and raised in St. Louis. She graduated from William Woods College in 1981 and is the arranger and songwriter for the Dixie Chicks. During our talk, the former math teacher said, "I

wrote my first song when I was 30 and wondered what it would be like to have the courage to write something original from the heart. She was inspired by great songwriters like Nancy Griffith; Mary Chapin Carpenter; Bob Dylan; Peter, Paul, and Mary; and Joni Mitchell. When asked about her future songwriting plans Macy replied, "I plan to write a song

the old time fiddler championships. "Two and a half years ago when all of our respective bands were breaking up - we just wanted to keep playing that summer instead of working our regular jobs," Martie expressed, "So we've had short periods of time playing regionally." When the barriers dropped and the truth was known Emily exclaimed, "We want a record deal! We want to travel and play and record. We want management and want to sign with our booking agent who is working with us right now."

I asked the band what their favorite place to play was (besides Austin) and Robin replied, "The best music we ever made was sitting on a hardwood floor where everybody could hear each other, you can't pick up any P.A. equipment - just the natural acoustics. The best music we've ever played has been in that jam session!"

Dale Evans wrote "Happy Trails" and is Queen of the cowgirls. Ms. Evans is not only a Texas citizen, but is an inspiration for this female quartet that goes by the name Dixie Chicks. Their latest album is a self-released CD that goes by the moniker "Thank Heaven for Dale Evans." The Dixie Chicks are considering adding a slide and percussion in their future projects.

The summer of 1991 marked their second performance at the Austin Aquafest where the band was very well received. They also had a great response at the SXSW Music and Media Conference earlier this spring when the group wowed the audience with their show at the Hyatt Atrium. The Dixie Chicks have appeared with George Strait, Garth Brooks, Restless Heart, Emmylou Harris, Kentucky Headhunters, and Alan Jackson. In this writers opinion, I believe that these ladies are headed for the top as long as they don't sell out to commercialism.



## DIXIE CHICKS

a month until Christmas."

Sisters Emily and Martie Erwin are the youngest members. Emily was born in Pittsfield, Massachusetts and just graduated from Green Hill School in Dallas. Martie is currently a senior attending S.M.U. Martie and Emily, influenced by their father, grew up listening to bluegrass style music of the past. Martie has placed two years in