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ALBERTA'S MAGAZINE OF THE WESTERN LIFE

FALL 1999 \$3.95
VOLUME 1, ISSUE 2

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Dixie Chicks

They're hip, they're hot,
they've got real talent and
they're at the top of the
country charts



Chicks r

Not your typical "new country" artists, the Dixie Chicks are true musicians — with an attitude

HICKS RULE.

They rule country airwaves and have walked off with the big hardware at music awards. And in a world often dominated by rhinestones and big hair, the Dixie Chicks, with their funky fashions and cowboy-hat-less blond locks, rule their own careers.

This is no stand-by-your-man stuff. The female music trio, who mix bluegrass and folk with country ballads, know what they want and no one, not even a big bad old record company, is going to push them around.

"You're taught as a Texas musician — it's in your blood — to make your own claim to what you are and fight for it," says Dixie member Emily Robison.

"The Nashville way tends to differ a little bit ... they're like, 'okay, we'll give you some songs and we'll make you a star'."

But when Robison arrived in Nashville with her sister Martie Seidel and the third member of the Chick triumvirate, Natalie Maines, they staged their very own musical Alamo.

They were blonde, loved young, fun fashions, and had already honed their sound from a decade of street corners, conventions and the honkytonks of Texas' live music circuit.

"I don't think people in Nashville really got us at first. They almost took us

on as this little pet project. Like 'okay, there's this little cowgirl band out of Dallas you know, we'll just give them a little bit of money and see what happens'."

And look what happened.

Their 1997 album *Wide Open Spaces* has sold seven million copies, an all-time record for a country group. It also brought home a shelf full of awards this year, including Grammys for Best Country Album and Best Country Vocal Performance Duo/Group.

The Academy of Country Music named it Album of the Year, and the Dixie Chicks as the top new group, as well as the top Vocal Duo or Group of 1999. And in September, they took the Country Music Association honours for single of the year and best music video.

The newest Dixie Chicks album, *Fly*, released in September, was ranked number one across the U.S. by Billboard for weeks.

These chicks are hot, red hot.

"It's almost like we surprised them," says Robison in a telephone interview from her Texas home.

"I don't think their expectations were even near what our expectations were."

Along the way, the group has picked up a wave of younger fans — more than 60 per cent are under 25. But the audience is mixed, from young teenage girls, to middle age couples and pre-

teen girls at concerts where they sing the Chicks' bluegrass, country ballads and folk songs word for word.

"We joke about how the traditional fans come up to us and say 'I like y'all because y'all are bringing back all the old country, you know, the traditional instruments and all that stuff,'" says Robison.

"Then you talk to the younger, newer fans and they say 'I like y'all because you're not country'. It's kind of like we're kind of somewhere in the middle and that lends itself to a broad base of fans."

Part of the Chicks' appeal is their irreverent on-stage presence and eclectic, colourful style. We're talking pink vinyl, fun fur, and platform shoes, a penchant for boas and tiny chicken feet tattoos across their feet, representing their No. 1 singles and gold and platinum successes.

They're 20-something and they're dressing their age.

"I think it's something fun — we're kind of girly girls, we like to get dressed up, we like to have clothes, and play around in makeup and do all the rest of the stuff that's part of our personalities."

But when Seidel and Robison started out in the mid-1980s with two other singers — who have since left the band — they debuted in timeless country style, all fringes and rhinestones, with

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