

GUITAR ONE PRESENTS

Women Who Rock™

MUSIC * LIFE * ATTITUDE

WINTER 2002/03

Gutsy
Gifted
Glamorous

DIXIE CHICKS

Pop's
Saving
Graces?

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Welcome Home

The Dixie Chicks deserve a hero's reception for providing one of the few promising rays of light across today's dim pop landscape. **By Bob Gulla**

IT'S A BOLD STATEMENT, BUT LET'S GO AHEAD AND SAY IT:

The Dixie Chicks have rescued pop music. It was touch and go there for a while. Pop was drowning in a sea of bad R&B, prefab teen queens, and second-rate rap. The scene is still damaged; lacking in quality, lacking in appropriate role models, lacking in excitement, enthusiasm, and energy. Pop needed a hero, someone to yank it from corporate clutches and place it in the loving hands of real artists and genuine musicians. It needed someone who could be an inspiration to the young and impressionable, and quick. The longer this gaudy rooster ruled the roost, the more time lots of little hens had to admire it, love it, imitate it, and perpetuate its crassness. After all, they knew nothing else.

Enter the Dixie Chicks.

Emily, Martie, and Natalie are first and foremost three girls from Texas, simple in their upbringing and straightforward in their backgrounds. They grew up in close-knit musical families in and around Dallas. Natalie's dad was a steel guitar pro, so she got a bird's-eye view of music-making. But Emily and Martie Erwin grew up like any normal kids in the '70s, splitting time between schoolwork, music, sports, and family. Their parents made sure the sisters—there were three—dedicated themselves to their endeavors, but they didn't push too hard. Music became a natural offshoot of their lives, one that stuck.

Emily and Martie began their sister act modestly by busking on the streets of Dallas. In the early '80s they formed an all-teen bluegrass act, and soon after, Martie won second place in a national fiddle competition. The band, originally known as Blue Night Express and including Robin Macy and Laura Lynch, would soon change its name to the Dixie Chicks.

But it wasn't until the sisters met Natalie, who herself started playing the fiddle at an early age, that things began to click. They initially came together in the studio, laying down tracks for *Little Ol' Cowgirl*, one of their early releases. Producer Larry Seyer enlisted Natalie's dad, Lloyd Maines, to contribute to those sessions, setting in motion a chain of events that would lead to Natalie becoming the group's energetic lead singer. She was just 18 ... and boy, could she sing. A former Berklee College of Music student, her guitar playing wasn't too bad, either.





