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**Ruffled Feathers: The
Dixie Chicks
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EXCLUSIVE

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The Big One



Ruffled Feathers:

The Dixie Chicks may be the Biggest Girl Band in the World, but that's just what gives 'em the right to crow about million-dollar legal fees, Michael Jackson "looking like an idiot and a fool," and soul-free country radio. Stephen L. Betts brings it all back *Home* to concert lovin' babies, friendship with rock goddesses and a very special idea for their upcoming tour.





(L-R) Martie Maguire, Natalie Maines, Emily Robison.

Changing the way they do business—the Chicks rule the roost at *Home*, with a new label, Open Wide, and an album destined to go multi-platinum.

The Dixie Chicks have two things to say about their recent lawsuit with record label, Sony:

1) It happened. 2) It's over.

"I don't think fans need to get bogged down in the business side of this business, which is not always the nicest or cleanest," says Dixie Chicks lead singer Natalie Maines, defending their decision (and their attorney's advice) to stay mum on the matter as the lawsuit unfolded in the media. "We didn't need to or want to be out in public, giving our side and sounding off. We were wronged, and I will stand behind that forever," maintains Natalie, 27, the most outspoken member of the Texas trio.

"Whatever people thought, I hope what they get out of it is that we stood up for what we believed in."

Conscious of their position as female role models, Natalie adds, "I think that it's good for girls to see that we stuck our necks out and did what we believed was right. In the end we got a great, positive result."

Though she may have a reputation for unusual candor, Natalie does echo the sentiments of many artists who choose to keep their private lives private, and chastises those who take their case to the media without regard for discretion. As an example of the latter, she cites deposed King of Pop Michael Jackson, whose recent wranglings with Sony have included charges of racism against the head of the label, Tommy Mottola.

"I don't want to know everyone's goings-on," Natalie says. "I just like their music. I don't need to know what they do in business. Michael Jackson's playing out his ordeal the opposite of how we did. He did what we didn't want to do, and he looks like an idiot and a fool."

The lawsuit, settled this June with a new Sony contract, began a year earlier when the label sued the Chicks for breach of contract. The Chicks, unhappy with the terms of their original deal, countersued. The end result was a delay in the release of their long-anticipated follow-up album to *Fly*, which sold over 10 million copies. One stipulation of the new agreement was the establishment of the Chicks' own record label, Open Wide, to be distributed by Sony. The first release under the new label, the acoustically-driven *Home*, is fast approaching platinum status and has no doubt helped smooth things over for the trio and Sony.

"We were wronged, and I will stand behind that forever," maintains Natalie.

"In friendship, you hold a grudge," says fiddle player Martie Maguire, 32. "In business, you don't have to hold a grudge, as long as you work everything out. I really do respect the fact that Tommy [Mottola] came to the table and admitted to a lot of things—relationship, communication and accounting problems that we've had. So many artists have problems with their labels, but in the whole scheme of their career, they realize that it's not worth it. As soon as our attorney's fees hit the one mil-

lion dollar mark, we were like, 'This is ridiculous!'"

Martie, however, was able to keep her mind on another legal matter—matrimony. In August 2001, she wed Irish schoolteacher Gareth (pronounced Garth) Maguire. The two were married by a minister in Hawaii, then held another ceremony for his family in March 2002 in Northern Ireland. In spite of being involved in what she terms "this crazy, crazy industry," Martie says she's "just relieved to be settled again."

As for Emily, 30, she's spending more time with her husband, singer/songwriter Charlie Robison, whom she married in May, 1999. The couple is expecting their first child, a boy, in mid-November. The name they've settled on is Charles Augustus, though he'll probably be called "Gus," which Emily explains comes from their favorite character in the Larry McMurtry novel, *Lonesome Dove*.

Natalie and her husband, actor Adrian Pasdar (PAX TV's *Mysterious Ways*) met at Emily and Charlie's wedding and got married themselves in June 2000 following a Chicks performance in Las Vegas. They welcomed first child, Jackson Slade, nicknamed Slade, in March 2001. Natalie jokes that she's been giving Emily a fair share of baby advice. "The books are pretty thorough," she says, laughing, "but I've told her a couple of things that they don't tell you. Usually they're not good things!"

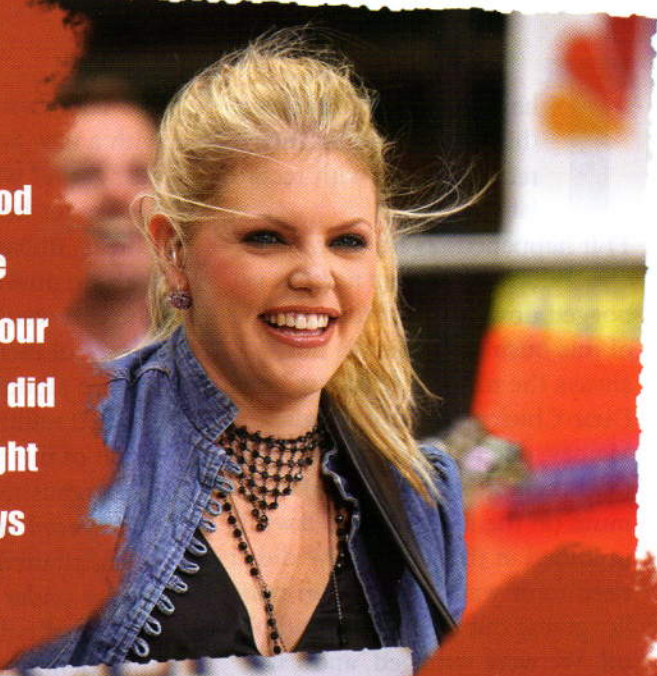
The subject of Natalie's son naturally leads into a conversation about the new album which features a track named "Lil' Jack Slade." A rollicking bluegrass instrumental written by Emily and Martie, with Terri Hendrix and the album's producer (Natalie's dad and Slade's grandpa), Lloyd Maines.

Martie admits that the three


Chicks are "sitting on a goldmine," but, no, she's not referring to their renegotiated contract. She's actually talking about the results the three of them have experienced when writing together. Though the goldmine is just a single nugget on *Home*, "White Trash Wedding," co-written by all three, is destined to be this album's closest thing to Fly's "Goodbye Earl" or "Sin Wagon" (though no loutish husbands or "mattress dancing" are present). The song's comical line "I shouldn't be wearin' white and you can't afford no ring," may raise a few eyebrows at radio should it ever be released as a single. As to the song's origins, Martie says, "[It] did start out as a song my husband and I were writing, and we kind of abandoned it. I'd been married before, and he didn't have a penny to his name, and he'd come over from Ireland with the shirt on his back. So we kind of thought we'd poke fun at ourselves." At the breakneck pace of two minutes and 21 seconds, this hot bluegrass jam begs for repeated plays.

The Chicks mine their more tender side with the exquisite "Godspeed (Sweet Dreams)" written by Radney Foster, who wrote "Never Say Die" on their runaway hit album *Wide Open Spaces*. "It's just a heart-wrenching song, and the story [behind the song] is so touching," Martie recalls. "His ex-wife moved their son [Julien] to Paris when he was 3 or something, and he was just devastated. I know it's hard when families split, but I just don't think it's in the best interest of the child to move them away from parents."

Radney wrote "Godspeed" to comfort his child at bedtime, even when he couldn't be there to tuck him in or read to him. Now 11, Julien still listens to Radney's ver-

A close-up photograph of Natalie Maines, one of the members of the band The Chicks. She is smiling broadly, showing her teeth. She has blonde hair pulled back and is wearing a denim jacket over a black top with a beaded necklace.

"I think it's good for girls to see that we stuck our necks out and did what we thought was right," says Natalie.

A photograph of Martie Maguire, another member of The Chicks. She is singing into a microphone and playing a violin. She has blonde hair and is wearing a white top.

"In business, you don't have to hold a grudge, as long as you work things out," Martie added.

A photograph of Emily Robison, the third member of The Chicks. She is playing an acoustic guitar and looking off to the side. She has brown hair and is wearing a blue top.

Emily and husband, singer/songwriter Charlie Robison are expecting their first child in mid-November.

sion of the song every night before he goes to sleep. Martie remembers the difficulty the Chicks had recording the song, especially since Radney and his son were in the studio during the session. "Radney was sitting in a chair listening, and his son was behind him, with his arms around his shoulders, I just lost it! It's such a special song knowing the story. When we were in the studio, Natalie cut her vocals live. She went in and did it in a little hallway in the studio. You might be able to tell that this song sounds a little different from the others, with some of the cracks in her voice. The emotion is real, because she just could barely get through the song without thinking about Slade. Now when I hear the song, I guess because I'm around Slade all the time, I just think of that mother-son bond, and what a beautiful song it is." Natalie recalls, "I wanted to sing that one live with no overdubs. When I sing it, it's very difficult not to get choked up every time. I think I'm definitely more sensitive now that I have a child. I can just imagine if I didn't get to see my little boy every single day."

And according to Natalie, Slade is getting quite a musical education by hanging out with the Chicks and their friends. "He's been to a lot of concerts and that's probably where he's the most well-behaved. He's just mesmerized, and loves watching people play. Any time Martie's in the room playing fiddle and Emily's playing banjo, he could sit there, I swear, for eight hours and not move a muscle."

At just 18 months old, Slade has been to concerts by Sheryl Crow, Stevie Nicks, David Gray and Lyle Lovett, which Natalie enthuses "was one of the best shows we've ever seen." Sharp-eyed

fans may also have witnessed Natalie's volcanic reaction when another obvious favorite, ZZ Top, took the stage at the CMT Flameworthy Awards.

Diversity is clearly a concept the Dixie Chicks have wholeheartedly embraced, and the trio have infused *Home* with unique songs from writers like Patty Griffin and Stevie Nicks. Patty contributed the sharp-tongued and sensual "Truth No. 2," and the ethereal "Top of the World" which closes out the record and emphasizes their more mature tone. Their second single is Fleetwood Mac front-woman and legendary rock goddess Stevie Nicks' classic, "Landslide," which Natalie declares "is simply, one of the greatest songs ever written." She was actually 27 when she wrote it, so I found that interesting that she felt those lyrics at the same time I related to them in my life." Even though she and Stevie are friends, Natalie says she's careful not to over-analyze her lyrics. "I don't like to pry too much into each line because then it might ruin what it means to me. Stevie is just a wonderful woman to talk to, because everything that comes out of her mouth is so eloquent. She

writes these little notes and letters to me that are as beautiful as her songwriting. She's such a beautiful woman and soul. What distinguishes her is that she is so supportive of other women. Maybe we connect more with older women in music. They're not our competi-

"...Video budgets are so small, and artists get stuck using the same old directors," protests Martie. "I mean, the lyrics will say, 'I put on my boots,' and they put on their boots in the video!"

tors. They have true advice. They've lived the life. Stevie's very open about who she is and the mistakes she's made."

As "Long Time Gone," their first single, was climbing the charts, many predicted it would stall well below its eventual No. 2 peak position, due in part to lyrics such as "We listen to the radio to hear what's cookin', but the music ain't got no soul." Martie says of those keeping too tight a playlist, "They don't know what they're missing—that's my beef with country radio. You've got to move your



Photo by Mazur/WireImage

Natalie and Stevie Nicks perform together at the 2002 VH1 Divas Live. Natalie declares, “‘Landslide’ is simply one of the greatest songs ever written.”

audience to a new place. Coming off the *Fly* tour, our most successful songs were songs like “Ready to Run,” and “Goodbye Earl,” those kind of in-your-face...attitude-y, heavy bass, heavy drums. I just think you’ve got to tell the audience where you’re going next, and hope they stick with you. And if they don’t, maybe you open up to a new audience.”

While she may not be crazy for country radio, Martie admits she still loves making, and watching, music videos. “I love to sit in front of CMT, or VH1, or MTV for hours. It’s really entertaining. I just wish they would invest more in their videos and I wish the labels would pay for more of it. When I watch CMT, I’m sometimes more amused than entertained, because I

see some of the worst videos I’ve ever seen in my life. I think it’s because video budgets are so small, and artists get stuck using the same old directors,” protests Martie. “I mean, the lyrics will say, ‘I put on my boots,’ and they put on their boots in the video.”

Although they’ll take some time off for Emily to have her baby, the Dixie Chicks are looking ahead

to a new kind of tour that would allow them to play music from *Home*, but also showcase some of their collaborators. "We've talked about people like Bonnie Raitt,

**"Any time
Martie's in
the room
playing fiddle
and Emily's
playing banjo,
he (son
Slade) could
sit there, I
swear,"
laughs
Natalie, "for
eight hours
and not move
a muscle."**

Keb Mo' or Sheryl Crow," Natalie says of one concept for the tour. "If Emmylou [Harris] or Patty [Griffin] wanted to come out and do an acoustic set, we wouldn't

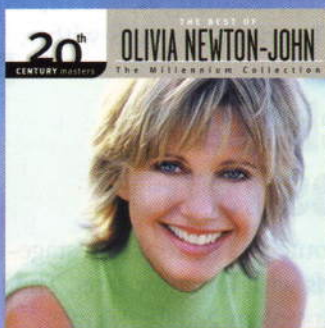
really want full band, full production, full everything. It would be more like sharing the stage, almost a *Crossroads* kind of idea or a Lilith Fair. It wouldn't be like asking the latest artist on Sony to open up for us; it would be about giving the audience a different taste of things. We were definitely the oddballs on Lilith Fair, but a new audience

opened up to us, and it really worked. We can't even begin to recreate it, but we like that idea."

While that will probably not happen until next spring, in the meantime fans can catch the Chicks on an upcoming network TV special, and on the CMT original series *Crossroads*, with longtime idol James Taylor.

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Chicks Degrees of Separation

You know, of course, that Dixie Chicks Emily and Martie are sisters. And you probably also know that Natalie Maines is the sister-in-law of Martie's husband, Gareth Maguire (his brother is married to Natalie's sister, Kim). And that Natalie's father is Home producer Lloyd Maines. But there are other connections both within the Chick family and outside the henhouse as well:

Natalie's husband, Adrian Pasdar, made his film debut as "Chipper" in the 1986 blockbuster, *Top Gun*, which also starred **Anthony Edwards**, who later went on to star in the TV drama *ER*, with **Julianna Margulies**, who appeared with Emily's husband, Charlie Robison, in the 1999 film, *The Big Day*. Charlie is the brother of songwriter Bruce Robison, who is married to singer Kelly Willis, who appeared (as a folk singer) in the film *Bob Roberts* starring actor/writer/director **Tim Robbins**. Tim Robbins starred in the film *The Player*, which was directed by Robert Altman, who also directed *Short Cuts*, featuring singer Lyle Lovett and his future ex-wife, **Julia Roberts**, who starred in *The Mexican* with The Sopranos' **James Gandolfini**, who is featured in the drama *A Civil Action*, along with Harry Dean Stanton, who appeared in the 1971 film, *Two-Lane Blacktop*, featuring **James Taylor**, who can currently be seen in the exclusive CMT series *Crossroads* with...

The Dixie Chicks!

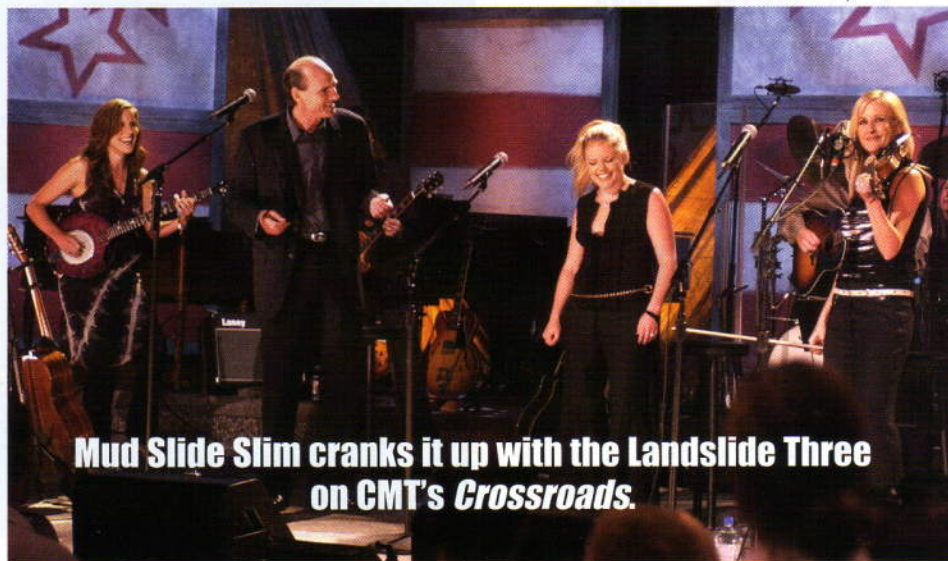


Fowl Play: Dixie Chicks Jam With James Taylor

"Hello, Cleveland," James Taylor shouted as he took the stage—in Nashville—for a taping of CMT's *Crossroads* with longtime fans, The Dixie Chicks. "That was original," the always outspoken Natalie Maines responded, adding, "Who would have thought two days ago that I'd be making fun of you! He's like my brother now!"

Fun continued to be the operative word of the evening as the Chicks and "brother James" traded quips, including Sweet Baby James' baby naming tips for Emily, who was five months pregnant at the time. "Mylar is good. And Nyquil, too" he joked. When an audience member asked James about his own babies, year-old twins Henry and Rufus, he laughingly admitted, "Well, I can't get 'em on the phone, but they're great!" Natalie then proudly proclaimed that Slade, had learned to say "apple."

Introducing James' 1985 hit, "Only One," Emily told the crowd, "I don't know if he liked it too much when we kept saying, 'When I was little, I listened to this song all the time.'" And Martie, who had remained fairly quiet throughout the show, confessed that when she was young she often kissed the cover of James' classic 1971 album, *Mud Slide Slim and the Blue Horizon*. "Me too!" James replied. "I was kissing Michael Jackson's *Thriller*." Natalie added, "Not anymore!"



Mud Slide Slim cranks it up with the Landslide Three on CMT's *Crossroads*.



Photo by Allespach/WireImage

Photo by Macur/WireImage

Photo by Spellman/WireImage

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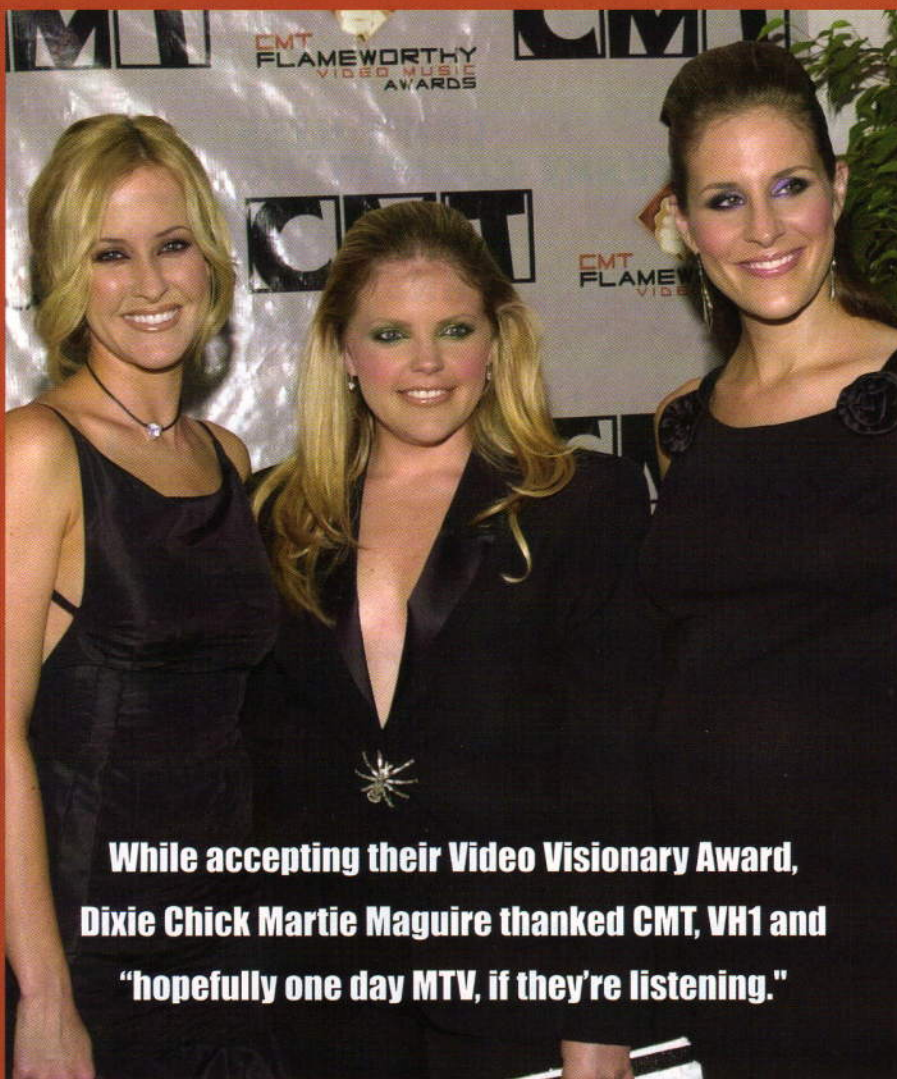


Photo by Adam White/WireImage

While accepting their Video Visionary Award, Dixie Chick Martie Maguire thanked CMT, VH1 and "hopefully one day MTV, if they're listening."

YOU CHOOSE THE MOST WANTED CHICKS CLIPS:

As recipients of the first-ever CMT Flameworthy Video Visionary Award, the Dixie Chicks have hatched 10 film-worthy videos with clips that are compelling, contemplative and sometimes comical. Which Chicks video is your favorite?

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Wide Open Spaces" | <input type="checkbox"/> "Ready To Run" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "I Can Love You Better" | <input type="checkbox"/> "Goodbye Earl" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "You Were Mine" | <input type="checkbox"/> "Without You" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "There's Your Trouble" | <input type="checkbox"/> "Long Time Gone" |
| <input type="checkbox"/> "Cowboy Take Me Away" | <input type="checkbox"/> "Landslide" |

Visit our Reader's page at www.countrymusictoday.com, and tell us which Chicks video you'd tune in to see again and again (and be sure to tell us why in 100 words or less!) All entries are eligible to win one of five HOT Dixie Chicks prize packs chock full of memorabilia.

