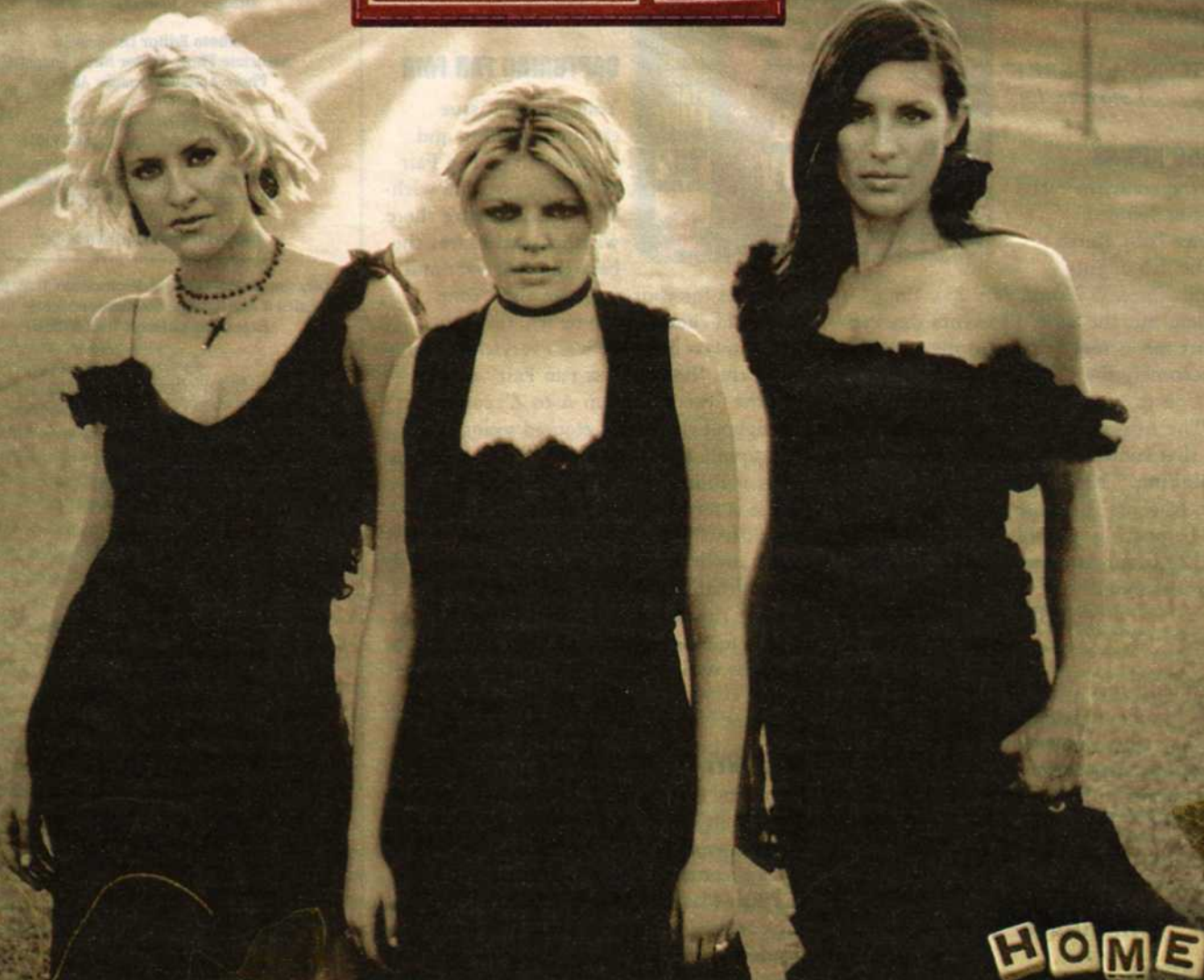


DIXIE CHICKS

HOME

THE NEW ALBUM

IN STORES TUESDAY, AUGUST 27, 2002



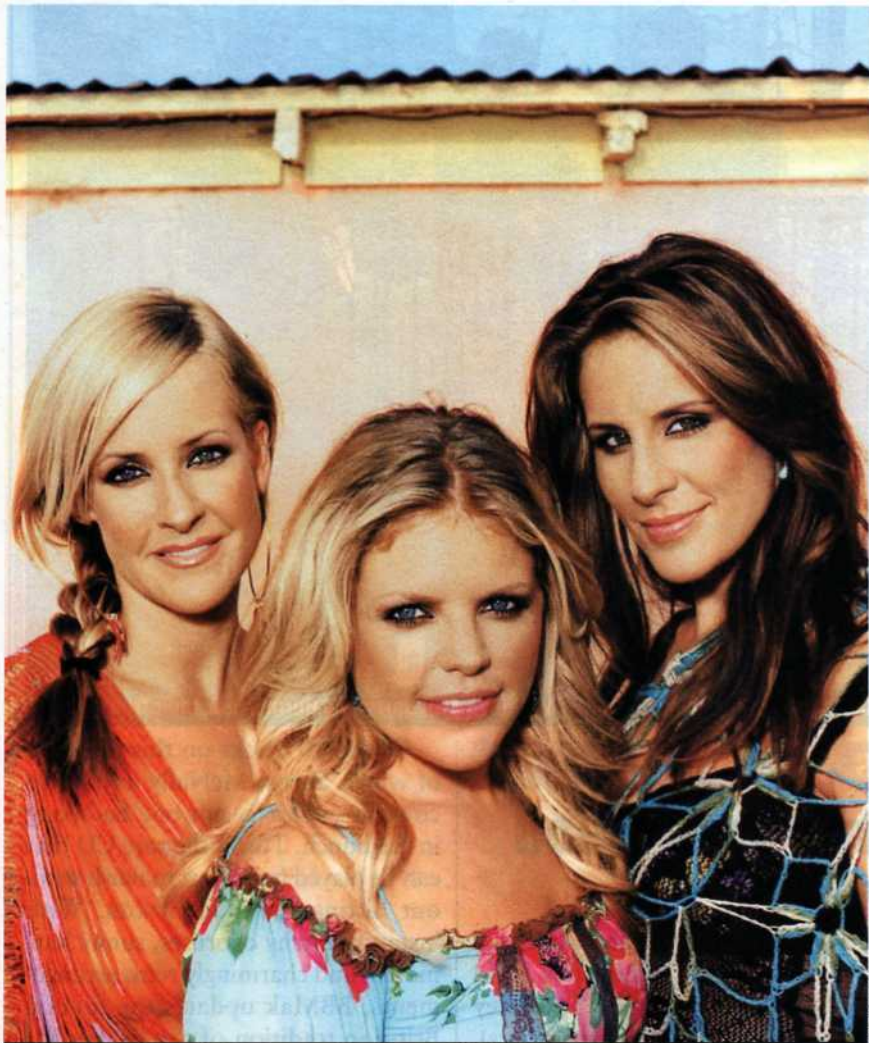
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Chicks Maguire (left), Maines and Robison paint their latest in shades of bluegrass.

JAMES HANCOCK III

Home

Dixie Chicks (Open Wide/Columbia)

Reviewed by Ralph Novak

Few artists were as prepared to jump on the bluegrass bandwagon as the Dixie Chicks, what with Martie Maguire's fiddle, her sister Emily Robison's banjo and their down-home harmonies with lead singer Natalie Maines. On this, the Chicks' follow-up to 1999's 10-million-seller *Fly*, their traditional picking and singing add a rootsy authenticity to numbers such as "Truth No. 2," a Patty Griffin song that boasts a twangy vocal by Maines and nimble banjo playing from Robison. The composing credits also in-

clude such bluegrass stalwarts as Marty Stuart, Radney Foster and Natalie's father, Lloyd Maines, who also coproduced the CD.

Not that this is a clichéd bluegrass project. In fact, the disc is noteworthy for its variety. One of the highlights is the Chicks' introspective version of the 1975 Fleetwood Mac tune "Landslide," complete with Maines's Nicksian vibrato. Another striking track is the eloquent, touching "Travelin' Soldier," a Vietnam-theme song cowritten by splendid singer-composer Bruce Robison, Emily's brother-in-law. And "More Love," a straightforward '60s-style plea for affection, helps enhance the album's warm, personal vibe, making it feel just like *Home*. **Bottom Line:** Chicks still rule the roost

Records are rated on a scale of one (poor) to four (excellent) stars:

Country

DIXIE CHICKS: "Home." Columbia.

★★★½

In the music business, there are followers and leaders. In 1998, the Dixie Chicks followed commercial radio with a safe bet called "Wide Open Spaces," which broke wide open on the charts. The following year, they followed with another radio-friendly hit album, "Fly."

In 2002, the Chicks have money, awards, a place in country music history and, now, enough confidence to cut to the front of the pack and lead.

With "Home," the Chicks have broken free of the country-hits cookie-cutter with a homespun jewel recorded literally at home. Produced in Austin by Lloyd Maines, father of lead singer Natalie Maines, it's pure Texas. The banjo and fiddle that flavored their previous pop hits have moved proudly to the front of the mix, nudging the Dixie Chicks nearer to where the grass is blue and the music is as honest as the feelings that inspire it.

It's a gutsy move.

Had this album been their first, Maines, Emily Robison and her sister, Martie Maguire, may never have been signed and certainly would not have found a place on commercial radio. Now, radio has no choice but to follow the monster it created.

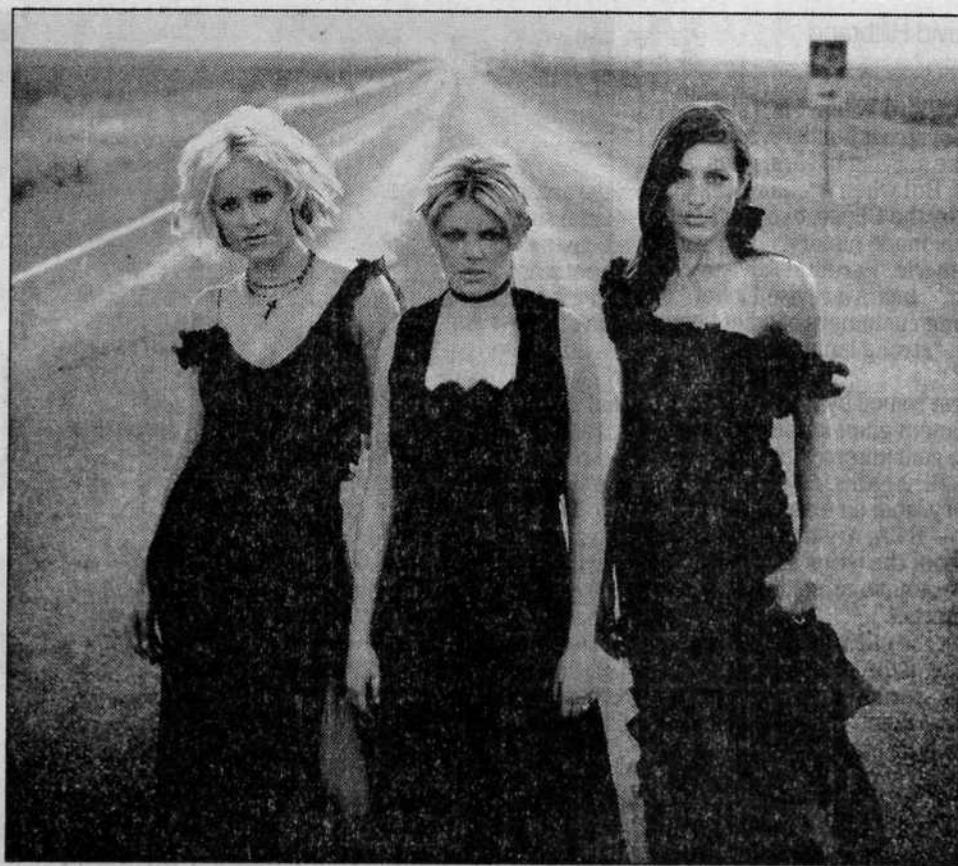
Simple, clean and authentic, "Home" is simply the Chicks' best album to date. The elder Maines embraced what's best about the trio — their sweet voices, intricate harmonies and musical chops — and scrapped the pop stuffing of their past. The Dixie Chicks wrote or co-wrote a third of the songs, including a fun romp called "White Trash Wedding" and the tender "I Believe in Love" with writing partner Marty Stuart.

Darrell Scott, who wrote "Heartbreak Town" for "Fly," came up with the song that is likely to be the new album's first hit, "Long Time Gone," and the Chicks put their imprint on two tunes by master songwriter Patty Griffin. Classic rock fans will recognize Stevie Nicks' "Landslide," but Maines sings it her way, while surrounded by subtle contemporary acoustic twang. Emmylou Harris slips in for a guest vocal on Rodney Foster's "Godspeed (Sweet Dreams)."

In a little stone house in the middle of a field near their homes, the Chicks recorded into an ancient console that once belonged to Elvis Presley. Perhaps that accounts for some of "Home's" vibrancy and soul.

The Chicks' sharp left turn into a bluegrass field shows that in addition to the star quality that carried them to the top, they have the courage to lead.

— John Hayes



James Minchin/Associated Press

The Dixie Chicks — from left, Martie Maguire, Natalie Maines and Emily Robison — make their best album to date with "Home."

Reviews



Dixie Chicks

Home

(Open Wide/Monument/Columbia)

The Dixie Chicks' "Long Time Gone" is about the most startling Top 5 hit in quite a while. You could listen to the radio 'til the cows come home and not hear another song that rocks so hard without electric guitars or drums – or gutsy enough to poke at the radio stations that made it a smash: *The music*, sings Natalie Maines, *ain't got no soul*.

There's certainly plenty of soul on *Home*, which more than delivers on the nerve and promise of that amazing hit. "Long Time Gone" should prepare fans for the Chicks' new direction: a return to the acoustic bluegrass sound of their pre-stardom days, with results that are sometimes rousing and often breathtaking.

Natalie and bandmates Emily Robison and Martie Maguire dress these 12 tracks in no more instrumentation than needed, giving the tunes room to shine on their own – and shine they do. "Travelin' Soldier," written by Emily's brother-in-law Bruce Robison, is an almost unbearably sad story of love in wartime. A graceful turn on Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide" fits in well with the album's main themes of maturing and family. And their closing version of Patty Griffin's aching "Top Of The World" – an elegy to the dreams given up for love – may be the most moving six minutes you'll hear all year.

The maturity and wisdom heard here suggest the Chicks have spent the three long years between albums settling into their lives as wives and mothers. (Emily's first child is due in November.) With *Home*, the Dixie Chicks really *do* go home – and they bring us along with them.

— Chris Neal



MORE REVIEWS

with Bob Anthony Jnr



DIXIE CHICKS

Home
MONUMENT/SONY

It's been a few years since the Dixie Chicks released their last album, *Fly*, and there has been plenty of speculation "in between drinks" as to what we could expect from their next album.

Well the wait is over and believe me, it has been worth the wait.

That may sound pretty clichéd but you could be forgiven for thinking that the Chicks had reached a peak and where could they go from their last success.

Home introduces a more sophisticated and perhaps little more "mature" sound from the trio but that's not to say there isn't that element of fun which has won them so many fans around the world.

Musically, it is an "evolution" of their sound and instrumentally, it is superior to their previous two albums.

One thing about the Chicks is that despite all the successes they have enjoyed, they remain true to being a country music

band first and foremost.

That hasn't changed on this album and in fact, there have been reviews that have said it is more "folk" than anything they have done. To some extent that is true but I tend to think it is because they have gone back to the roots of country music rather than folk.

There is probably more bluegrass influences on *Home* than before and the sounds have brought out the best in the trio's harmonies.

The Chicks are a little wiser now, all married and with kids starting to come into their lives, it shows through the lyrics and nature of some of the songs, particularly the slower numbers.

Tracks such as the gentle 'Landslide', the emotive ballad, 'Travelling Soldier', the easy, gentle rhythms of 'A Home', 'More Love' and 'I Believe In Love', the soft lullaby 'Godspeed' and the powerful ballad 'Top Of The World' almost command attention from the listener.

Don't be fooled into thinking the Dixie Chicks have gone all serious - hardly.

It wouldn't be a Dixie Chicks album without a healthy dose of fun and that shines in the opening track and current chart topping single, 'Long Time Gone', the more traditional country sounds of 'Truth No.8', the uptempo bluegrass rhythms of 'White Trash Wedding' (my favourite), 'Tortured', 'Tangled Hearts' and the frantic pace of the bluegrass instrumental 'Lil' Jack Slade'.

If you love your country

music in a "pure" form and not manipulated into something far removed from the more traditional styles, this is an album which should either in your collection now!

REVIEWS

DIXIE CHICKS

Home

OPEN WIDE/MONUMENT/COLUMBIA



In the last four years, the Dixie Chicks sold enough albums to equip every single soul in New York City with a copy. Twice, with

plenty to spare. That said, with *Home*, the Chicks have created an album that renders all of their previous achievements — artistic and commercial, pre- and post-singer Natalie Maines joining the fold — absolutely irrelevant. Recorded with producer Lloyd Maines last year during the group's devil-may-care, self-styled free agency period (they were, ahem, “on a break” from Sony), *Home* is the sound of three women doing exactly what they please, risks be damned.

The result: this is as close to their acoustic roots that they've been since the days when sisters Martie and Emily were winning ribbons at bluegrass festivals as teens. Much ado was made when the Chicks got banjo on country radio with “There's Your Trouble,” but the fact that *Home*'s twice-as-spunky (and much smarter) “Long Time Gone” went Top 5 without drums is no less noteworthy. And when they break loose on the spirited instrumental “Lil' Jack Slade” — look out. This is also the most thrilling and relevant they've sounded since the very first time newbie Natalie sang with the band and shocked the hell out of anyone expecting the same old hokey cowgirl routine. She sings the living hell out of this album, her brash and powerful soprano sounding bigger on even the quietest tunes than it did ripping through the arenas on the group's *Fly* tour.

Material wise, *Home* is almost all home-grown, with Texan-penned cuts by the likes of (transplant) Patty Griffin, Bruce Robison, Rodney Foster, Terri Hendrix and the Chicks themselves holding majority, and the peaks (“Travelin' Soldier,” “Top of the World”) far

outnumber the valleys (couldn't the cover of Stevie Nicks' “Landslide” have been saved for VH1 *Divas: The Album!*?). And so what if “White Trash Wedding” sounds like Fly's “Sin Wagon” redux? Maines sounds just as sassy belting out “Say I do and kiss me quick / Cause baby's on its way” on the former as she did when she was getting ready to “do a little mattress dancing” on the latter. In true Dixie Chicks style, even when it comes time to pay the piper, she still does it her way. Blockbuster sales or no, *Home* finds these Chicks right where they belong: on top of the world.

— RICHARD SKANSE

REVIEWS



DIXIE CHICKS

Home

OPEN WIDE/SONY

★★★★

Four years ago, the Dixie Chicks' hit "Wide Open Spaces" portrayed a young woman leaving her parents' house to pursue a dream and a life of her own. Yet the song reminded us that with freedom comes the room to make a big mistake. Heard in light of the Chicks' emergence as the biggest country act on the planet, the single rings out like a statement of purpose – especially given the gambles the three women take on their breathtakingly spare new album, *Home*.

The trio recorded the album not on Music Row, but in Texas with co-producer Lloyd Maines, father of lead singer Natalie Maines. They eschewed the

ditties of Nashville in favor of raw-boned material from the likes of Patty Griffin, Bruce Robison and Darrell Scott. Then they handpicked hotshot bluegrass musicians to record the songs, and Maines, Martie Maguire and Emily Robison rose to the occasion and played the fire out of their own instruments.

The result is a record closer in sound and sensibility to Alison Krauss' recent work than to the rock-leaning twang of *Wide Open Spaces* and *Fly*.

"Long Time Gone," the imperious opening romp, even goes so far as to take country radio to task for its narrow playlists. *They sound tired but they don't sound Haggard/They got money but they don't have Cash*, Maines sings, resisting her tendency to overemote.

The album's biggest risks, though, are

its ethereal cover of Fleetwood Mac's "Landslide," the trailer park mess-around "White Trash Wedding" and a barnstorming instrumental, "Jackson Slade," named for Maines' young son.

Self-appointed traditionalists doubtless will herald *Home* as the trio's "integrity move." Yet from their early cowgirl shtick to their insistence on keeping the banjo on "Wide Open Spaces," the Chicks have always done things their way – the way they apparently learned to do them back home.

— Bill Friskics-Warren

Country Music rates all recordings as follows:

- ★★★★ **EXCELLENT** A classic from start to finish.
- ★★★★ **VERY GOOD** An important addition to your collection.
- ★★★ **RESPECTABLE** Recommended with minor reservations.
- ★★ **FAIR** For loyal and forgiving fans.
- ★ **POOR** Seriously flawed.

Ratings are supervised by Country Music editors.

THE AUDIOPHILE VOICE

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Volume 9, Issue 1; \$6.95 US; \$8.50 CAN

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COVER
STORY



Dixie Chicks

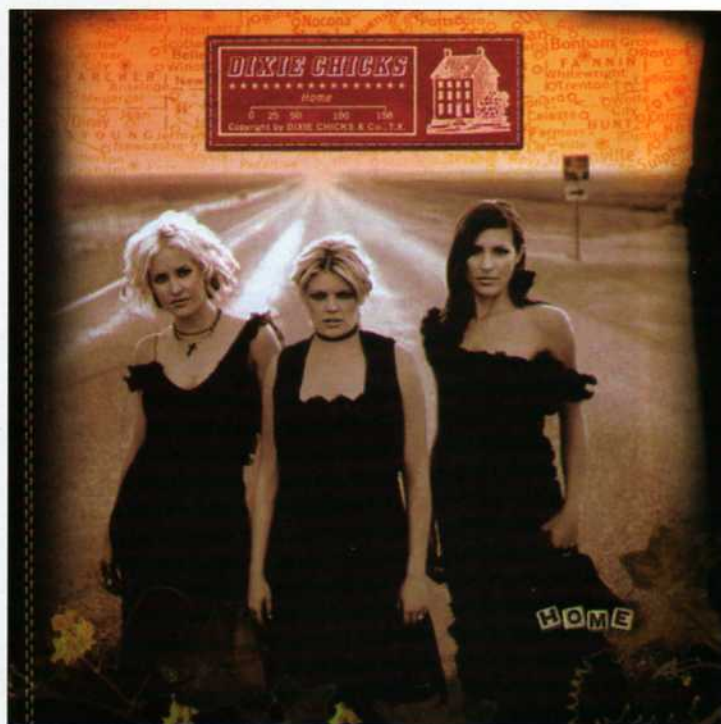
"Home"

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Country

The Dixie Chicks *Home*
Open Sky / Monument / Columbia CK 86840



Michael Tearson

DESPITE THEIR MONSTROUS success (their first two albums each sold well over 10 million copies!), the Dixie Chicks are a very subversive force in country music.

On the business front, they successfully stood up to the suits at Columbia Records to renegotiate a much better deal for their third album *Home*. And just as *Fly* was a far more stripped-down production than their debut *Wide Open Spaces*, *Home* is even more personal and stripped down. It flies in the face of the big studio style that dominates country radio these days. Instead, it is 180 degrees away, entirely acoustic save a single electric tremolo guitar part. And except for a martial snare drum on "Travellin' Soldier" and some other occasional scattered light percussion, the album is drum-free as bluegrass nearly always is.

The Chicks are made up vocalist Natalie Maines, fiddler Martie Maguire and her sister Emily Robison who plays the Dobro and banjo. Again, against all prevailing trends in country music, they recorded the album at home, in Austin, TX. They produced it themselves in concert with Natalie's father Lloyd Maines, who is a well-known producer with a long list of quality credits and credentials not to mention being a fabulous player of various kinds of guitars.

Other key players: Mountain Heart's mandolinist Adam Steffie, Nickel Creek's mandolin virtuoso Chris Thile, guitarist Bryan Sutton, and bass men Glenn

Fukunaga and Byron House. Top-shelf pickers all and they make *Home* rock!

The album's songs are terrific. The Chicks wrote several of them, including the hilarious "White Trash Wedding" and (with Marty Stuart) the sweet "I Believe in Love" and "Tortured Tangled Heart." Darrell Scott penned the rollicking opener "Long Time Gone," and the Chicks cover a pair of the wonderful Patty Griffin's songs "Truth No. 2" and "Top of the World." Radney Foster supplies the lullaby "Godspeed (Sweet Dreams)," an especially apt inclusion since two of the Chicks have had babies since the last album. Emmylou Harris adds harmonies here. My favorite is the heart ripping "Travellin' Soldier" about a high school cheerleader who has a huge crush on a soldier who died in Vietnam just after meeting her.

The oddest choice is the most familiar song here, Stevie Nicks' "Landslide." The Chicks do it pretty faithfully to the original Fleetwood Mac version only dressing it up a bit in bluegrass tones.

Home is a home run, a tremendously satisfying album end to end. If it accidentally has the salutary effect of bringing a bit more real country sound to country radio so much the better. It is performed with verve and grace. Technically, it couldn't be more rock solid. The feel of the acoustic instrumentation is absolutely lovely. Everyone involved should be quite proud of *Home*.