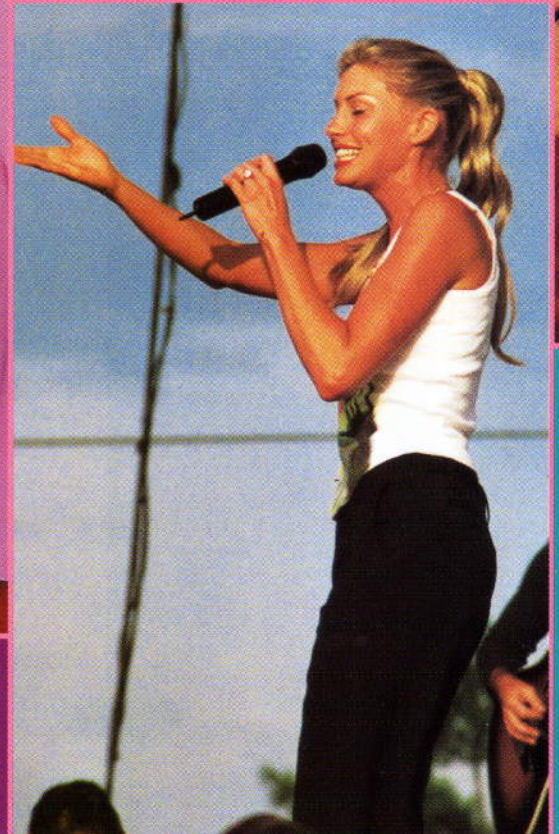
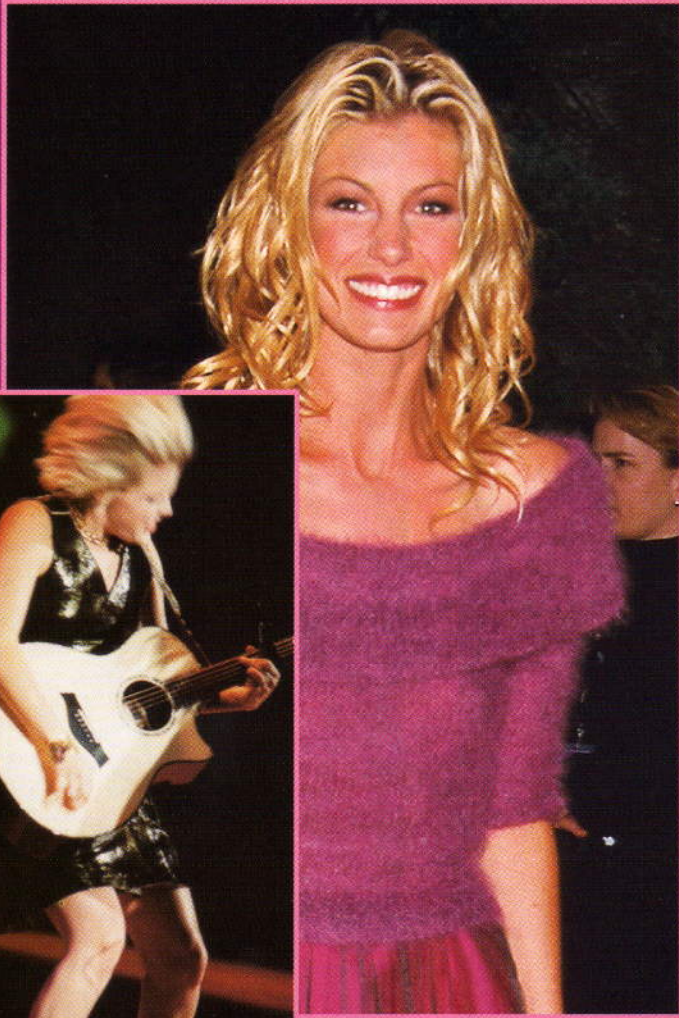


# THE HOTTEST WOMEN IN COUNTRY







LEFT: NATALIE MAINES: MIKE KLINE/WILDSHOTS LLC, FAITH HILL: LISA ROSE/GLOBE PHOTOS INC. (2), NATALIE MAINES: MARK ALLAN/GLOBE PHOTOS INC., FAITH HILL: JENNIFER FANI; RIGHT PAGE: DIXIE CHICKS: JILL JOHNSON/HUTCHINS PHOTO AGENCY, DIXIE CHICKS: CHRIS MOODY/HUTCHINS PHOTO AGENCY, MARTIE SEIDEL: FITZROY BARRETT/GLOBE PHOTOS INC.



# The Dixie Chicks Are







# Flying High



# The sassy songbirds prove shades of country, bluegrass, blues and a little rock can make beautiful music together.

By David Fantle and Thomas Johnson

**T**he dynamic trio known as the Dixie Chicks are the real deal. They're not a concocted girl group, and they're not the creation of some Orlando-based producers who market bubblegum bands to kids at an assembly line pace.

"A year ago, my friends would say, 'Oh, I get this Dixie Chicks thing — they're like the Spice Girls, except

country,' " Brian Philips of Dallas' Susquehanna Radio told *Rolling Stone*. "If you go to see them, you think that for about 30 seconds — and then you realize that they're one of the most accomplished, tightest and best-sounding live acts that you'll ever see."

The Grammy-winning Chicks — consisting of Natalie Maines and sisters Emily and Martie Erwin (now

Robison and Seidel, respectively) — are gifted musicians and vocalists who have worked hard to achieve success. And with their unique fashion-conscious country look, they're the perfect package.

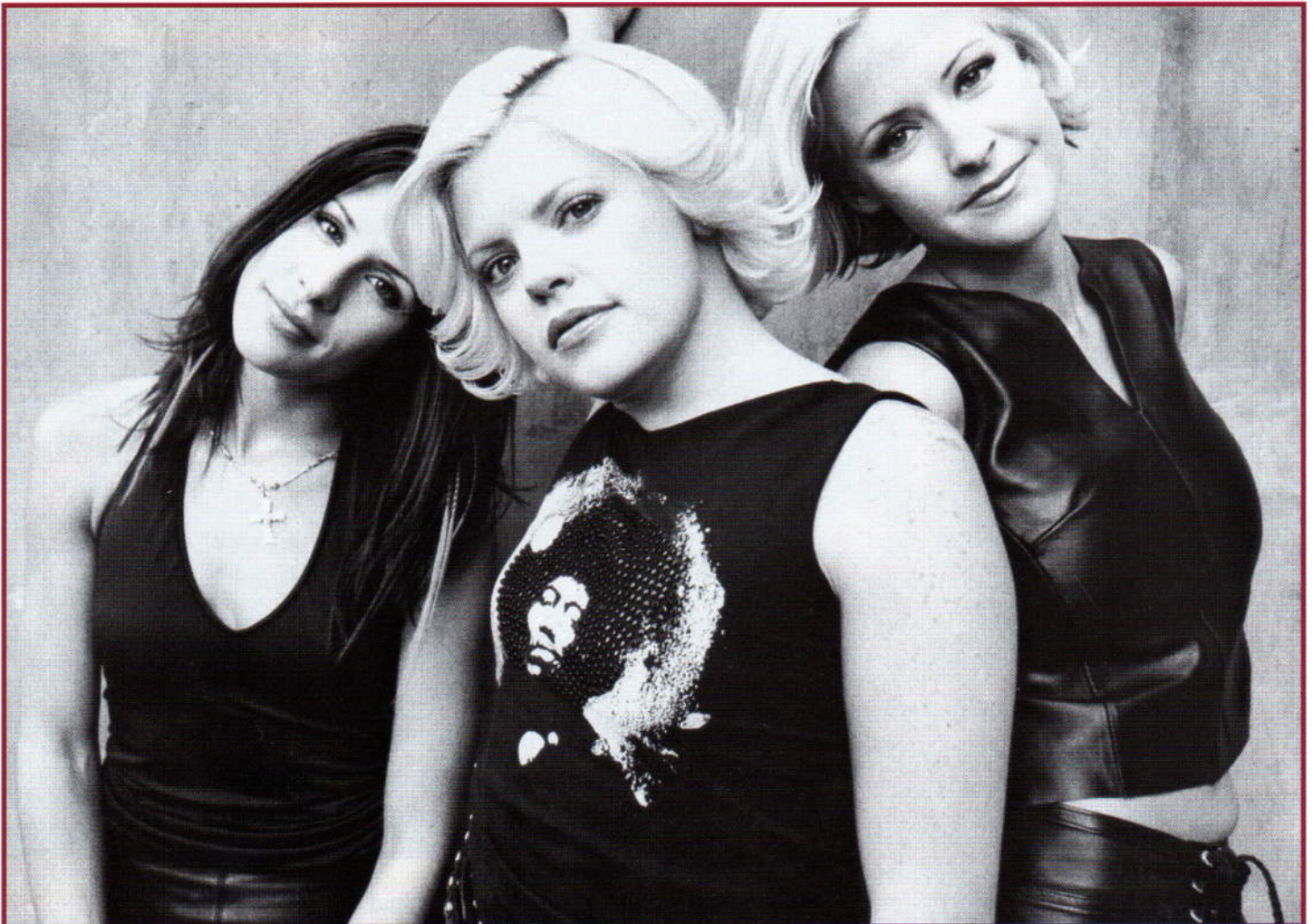
The three have also proven they are Chicks with a conscience. In August of this year, the group declined a multimillion-dollar endorsement deal with Coca-Cola in support of the Screen Actor's Guild strike, in which actors protesting a change in commercial pay rates are refusing to appear in ad shots. The trio reportedly walked away from talks when the soft drink behemoth refused to sign an interim agreement with the striking actors' union.

It's no surprise looking at the group's history that the Dixie Chicks adhere to such a strong work ethic.



Emily Robison, Natalie Maines and Martie Seidel (l to r) rock out during a live Dixie Chicks performance.





The Chicks' musical background is more than peepworthy: As preteens, sisters Robison and Seidel's (far left and right) band Blue Night Express opened for Ricky Skaggs in Kentucky; Maines attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music.

The story of the Dixie Chicks begins deep in the heart of Texas — Dallas, to be exact — where Martie Erwin and her younger sister Emily grew up in a home filled with music. Encouraged on by their mother, a private school teacher who monitored their instrument practice sessions using an egg timer, both girls mastered several string instruments while still in elementary school.

In 1984, the Erwin sisters formed the Blue Night Express, a bluegrass band that gave the girls an opportunity to hone their vocal and instrumental skills at a variety of local gigs. The group, while still minors, toured the Lone Star state for five years before Martie and Emily, then 19 and 16 respectively, decided to disband the group in 1989.

COURTESY OF NBC MEDIA VILLAGE (2)

## The Chicks are Hatched

Within months, the Erwin sisters recruited two friends and resumed performing — this time on the sidewalks of Dallas' business district. Playing only for tips, the passers-by were so impressed that the group didn't need to pursue paying jobs that summer. In fact, the exposure gained on the busy streets of Dallas earned the band several paying gigs.

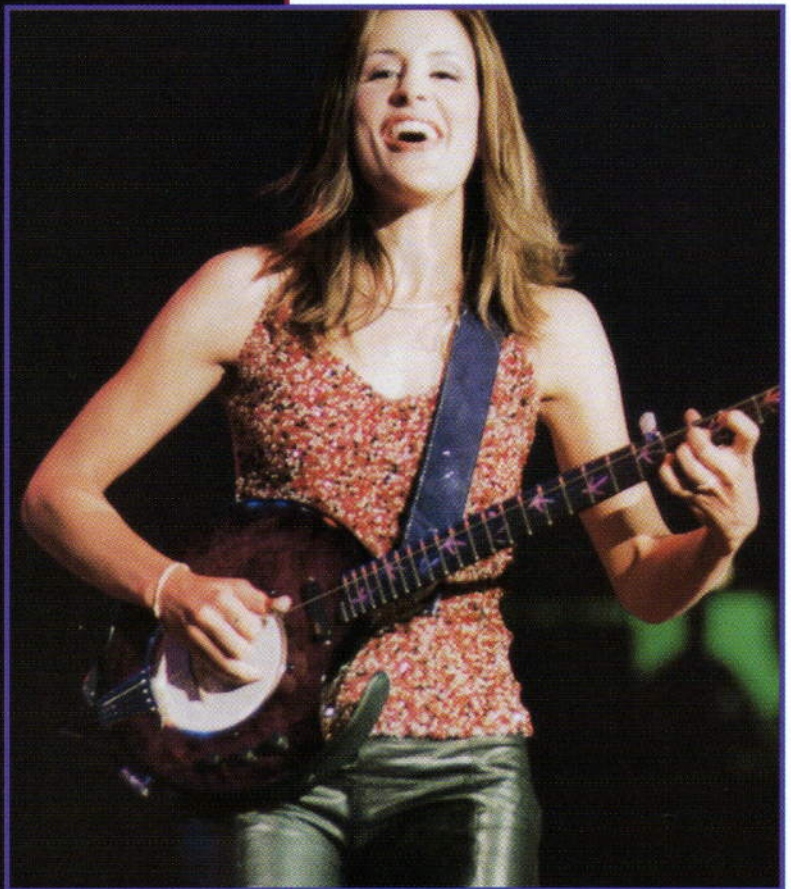
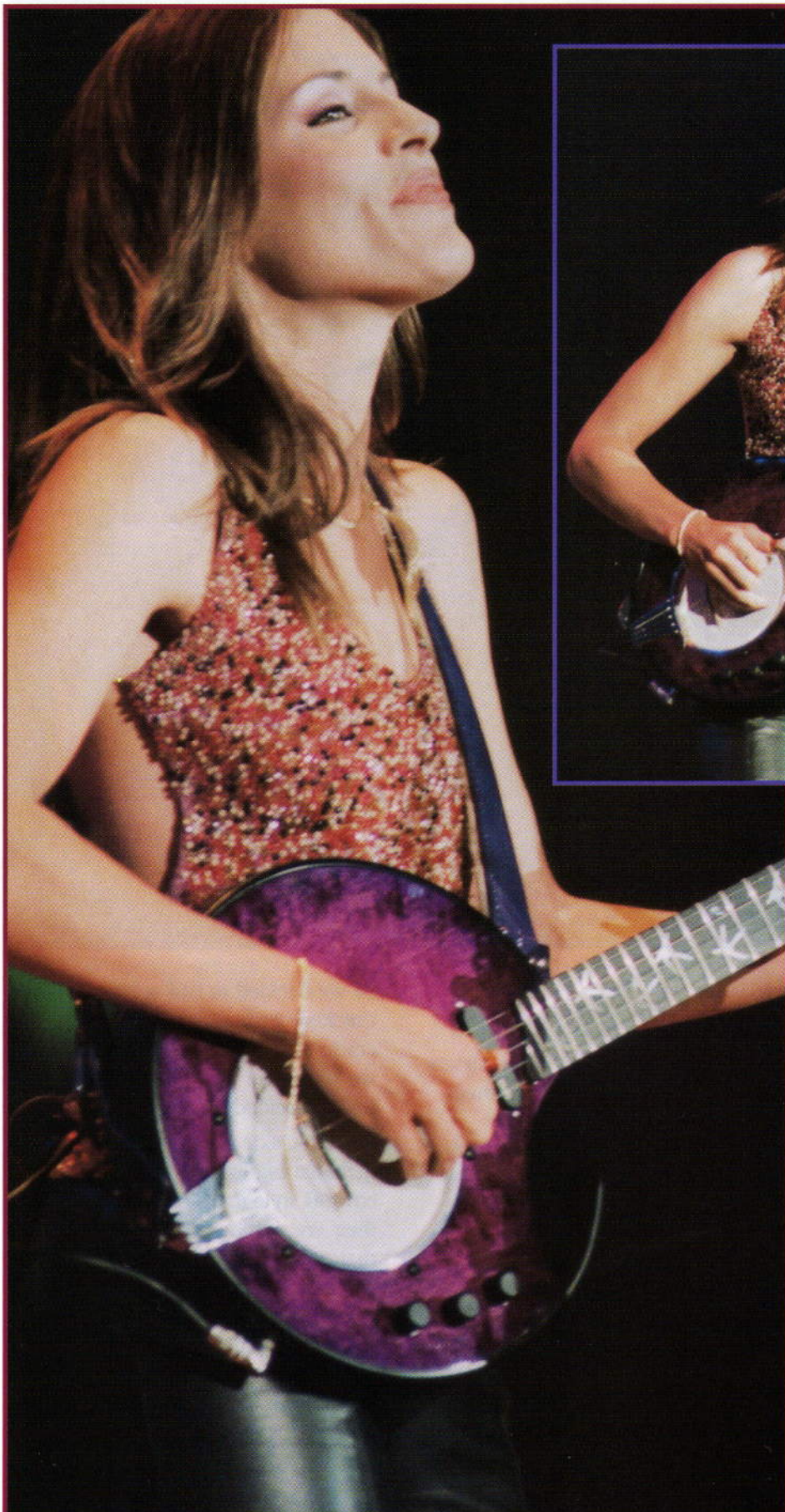
As street musicians, they went nameless only for a couple of weeks.

"At the time, we didn't realize it was going to grow," Martie told [topcountrymusic.com](http://topcountrymusic.com). "Anyway, we were on our way to the street corner one day and the Little Feat song 'Dixie Chicken' came on the radio.

So we decided to call ourselves Dixie Chicken, with a logo that had a chicken with long eyelashes. Then we shortened it to Chix, and we finally decided on Dixie Chicks."

The Dixie Chicks' earliest look included big hair and a Dale Evans, cowgirl-style dress code. But it was their vocal and musicianship skills that garnered them well-deserved praise and a loyal cult following. Martie is a master of the fiddle and mandolin, while sister Emily plays dobro, banjo and guitar. It wasn't long before the group was picked up off the sidewalk and given opening stints for country acts like Garth Brooks, George Jones and Emmylou Harris. In 1993, the quartet performed at both the mecca of country music, the Grand Ole Opry, ➔





The ever-eclectic Robison plays the dobro, banjo, guitar and acoustic bass.

and at President Clinton's Inaugural Ball.

While the group was developing a strong regional following, between 1990-94 it recorded three independently marketed CDs to sell at shows.

A lot of the band's attention came from being the novelty of an all-girl country-western group.

"That was a marketing tool for us," Martie said. "We knew it was a little different. But we grew to the point where we really wanted the music to speak for itself."

After taking progressively bigger strides, the Chicks began hitting some wrong notes personnel-wise. In 1992, one of the group's two main singers split, and in 1995, a second singer left. The Chicks were in desperate need of a mother hen since neither Emily nor Martie wanted to take on the role of lead vocalist. ➡



Emily  
Robison





Maines is a total guitar girl – master of both the electric and acoustic, she started singing at age 3 and left college to join the Chicks.

## Natalie Maines Flies In

Little did Emily and Martie realize but the vocalist they were looking for was almost under their beaks — noses, that is. Steel guitar player Lloyd Maines had played on two of the Dixie Chicks' independent releases and had given Emily and Martie a demo tape of his daughter, Natalie. An accomplished singer and musician, Natalie Maines, after completing high school, attended the prestigious Berklee College of Music.

"I loved watching them play," said Natalie. "Martie and Emily had always been the best part of Dixie Chicks. I had been waiting for my shot. I didn't know what I was going to do — I was in college, but I'd changed my major four times."

Within a week of their initial meeting, Natalie was out of college and on the road as the newest member and lead vocalist of the Dixie Chicks.

With a move away from sequined skirts and cowgirl hats and the addition of Natalie, the Chicks began to hit its stride, piquing the interest of several record labels. Following a trip to Austin to see one of Chicks' performances, executives from Sony Records liked what they saw and heard and signed the group to a recording contract. In 1997, the Chicks relocated to Nashville and began studio sessions for their major label debut.

## Wide Open Spaces

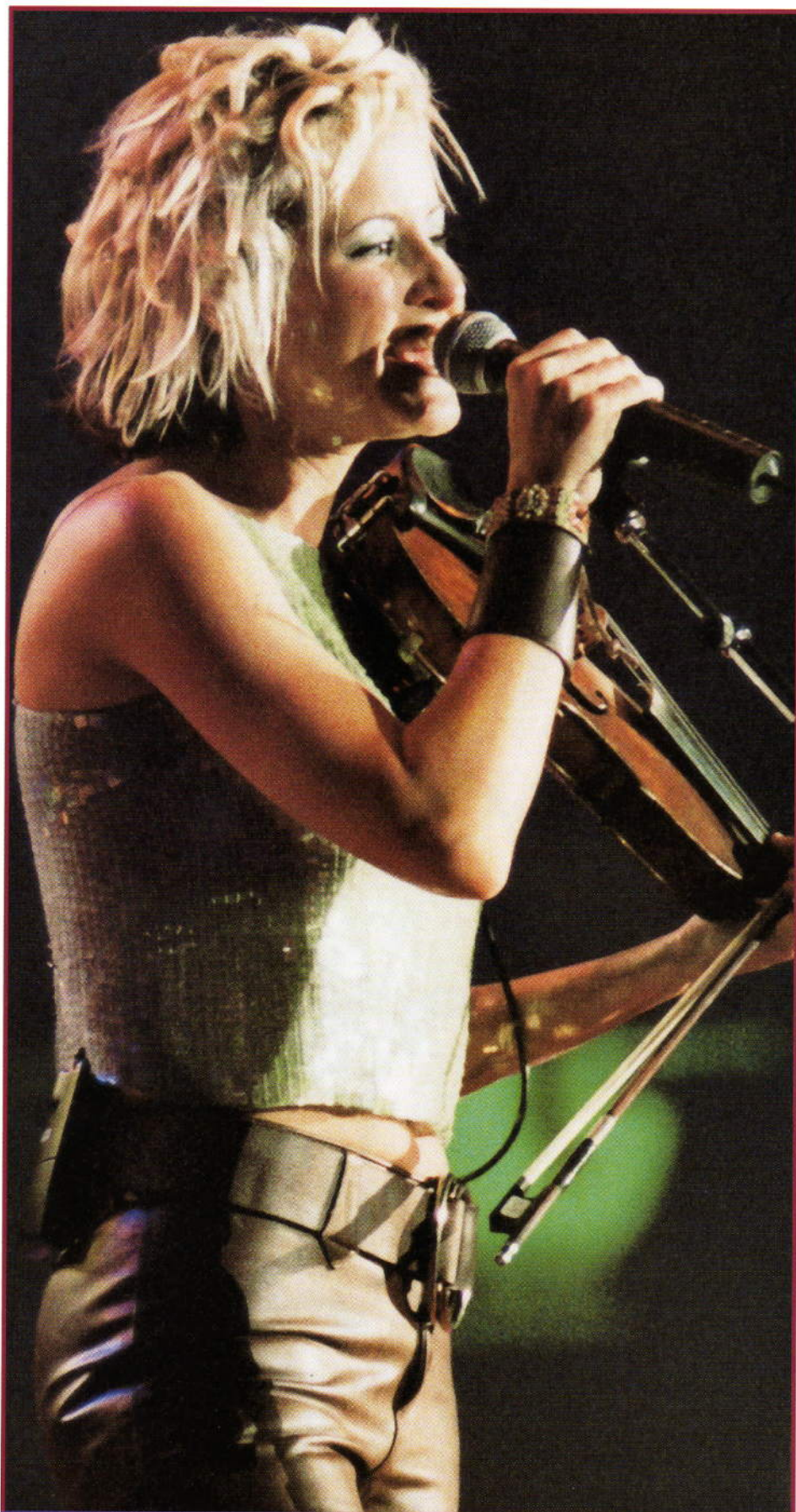
The initial recording moved the band beyond the bluegrass and western swing style that had until then characterized its music. The Dixie Chicks, along with its producers, moved its sound more into the country mainstream.

Released in 1998, "Wide Open Spaces" was an instant smash. The advance hit from the CD, "I Can Love You Better," became the group's ➔



Natalie  
Maines





Like her sister, Seidel's musical start was playing classical violin - by 12, she was fiddling the hours away.

first top 10 single, with the album attaining quadruple-platinum sales within a year of its release. The album would go on to become the best-selling album ever by a country music group.

"Wide Open Spaces" not only displayed the group members' musical mastery, but the variety of their musical tastes.

"I love being able to play a straight-ahead country tune and then rip into a bluegrass number, then a blues song," said Martie. "To me, that's what's fun about this group."

The Chicks encountered some resistance from the record's producer, but the group held fast to its vision.

"We do have to fight some battles, but they're getting much less since we've had the success," Natalie told *Rolling Stone*. "But they underestimate us all the time, still. We just do what we want to do. We were sort of naive when we were making 'Wide Open Spaces' and I think we want to keep that."

The success of the album did not go unnoticed. The Chicks were honored with a host of awards, including Grammys for Best Country Album and Best Country Vocal Performance by a Group.

In support of "Wide Open Spaces," the Dixie Chicks embarked on a 160-date nationwide tour, playing to enthusiastic crowds.

Since they weren't overnight sensations, the Chicks have remained grounded now that they've reached the top. As testimony to its mainstream status, the Dixie Chicks became the first country group to be included in last summer's 20 "Lilith Fair" tour dates.

## Chicks Take Flight

In September 1999, the Dixie Chicks released its second major label CD, "Fly." The first single from the album, "Ready to Run," appeared





A close-up photograph of a woman with blonde hair, identified as Martie Seidel, playing a violin. She is wearing a green sequined top and a brown belt. Her eyes are closed, and she has a focused expression. The background is dark with blurred lights.

Martie  
Seidel





The Chicks were top Grammy picks at the 1999 ceremony: They nabbed two awards at the 41st Grammy Awards.

on the soundtrack to the hit Julia Roberts film "Runaway Bride" along with the Chicks' version of the Supremes' 1966 hit "You Can't Hurry Love."

"Fly" sold an astounding 341,000 copies in its first week, a feat not even achieved by Shania Twain's 13 million-selling "Come On Over."

Natalie told *Rolling Stone* that "Fly's" edgier sound is a direct result of the three women exerting more independence with their record label.

"I think we were in charge a lot more than other artists on the last one, but you definitely see the difference on this one," she said. "I don't think our label necessarily thought we were going to be such a success when we were signed. And that was fine with us — we

were confident, and we loved proving ourselves."

It's unlikely that Sony is about to tinker with the goose (or in this case, chicken) that lays those golden eggs.

## Flying Around the Country

To support "Fly," the Dixie Chicks spent most of the summer and fall 2000 touring in 70 cities across the country. In addition to the Chicks' high-energy show, each concert featured a special opening act selected by the girls in the group. These artists included Willie Nelson, Patty Griffin and Ricky Skaggs.

The concert tour played to packed houses (many with fans wearing T-shirts that exclaimed "Chicks Rule") and included an

elaborate set decorated by Luc Lafortune, one of the designers of the visually thrilling Cirque de Soleil.

"The visuals really help set a mood for each song," said Martie. "We want it to be eye-catching, but not your standard rock and roll light show."

The Dixie Chicks also selected the World Wildlife Fund to be the beneficiary of the "Fly" tour, with one dollar from the sale of every ticket going to the international organization that protects endangered species.

## The Chicks Couple Off

Martie was the first Dixie Chick to get hitched, marrying businessman Ted Seidel. In May 1999, it was time for sister Emily to ➔



say "I do" — to fellow Texan and musician Charlie Robison. In true Dixie Chicks fashion, that wedding culminated with all the bridesmaids ending up in the Jacuzzi with their dresses on.

In June 2000, immediately following a Chicks performance in Las Vegas, Natalie, 25, tied the knot with actor Adrian Pasdar, 35. The two had met the year before at Emily's wedding. This was Natalie's second walk down the aisle. She divorced first husband Michael Tarabay in January 1999, after just 19 months of marriage.

## Chicks Rule

The Dixie Chicks steamroller shows no signs of slowing down anytime soon. In October 2000, the Chicks dominated the 34th Annual Country Music Association (CMA) awards, taking home four of the year's biggest prizes — including the top honor, Entertainer of the Year. The Dixie Chicks have now received a total of nine CMA awards since the release of "Wide Open Spaces."

With the "Fly" tour now over, the Dixie Chicks have earned

themselves a little well-deserved time off. Peel away the good looks and the provocative costumes and the Dixie Chicks have something more going for them — an abundance of talent.

"There are lots of people who put out records you never hear from again," Natalie told *People*. "There's no guarantee that won't happen to us. I feel like right now is the good old days. I think right now is the proving stage, to prove that we're for real."

Just don't expect these chicks to fly the coop anytime soon. **DC**

The Dixie Chicks mix up their unique brand of country charm at a show at the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas.





"We do have to fight  
some battles, but  
they're getting much  
less since we've had  
the success."

- Natalie Maines



The hometown girls donned gowns for the 34th Annual  
Academy of Country Music Awards in 1999.











# THE DIXIE CHICKS





THE DIXIE  
CHICKS