



special issue

# TIME

# 100

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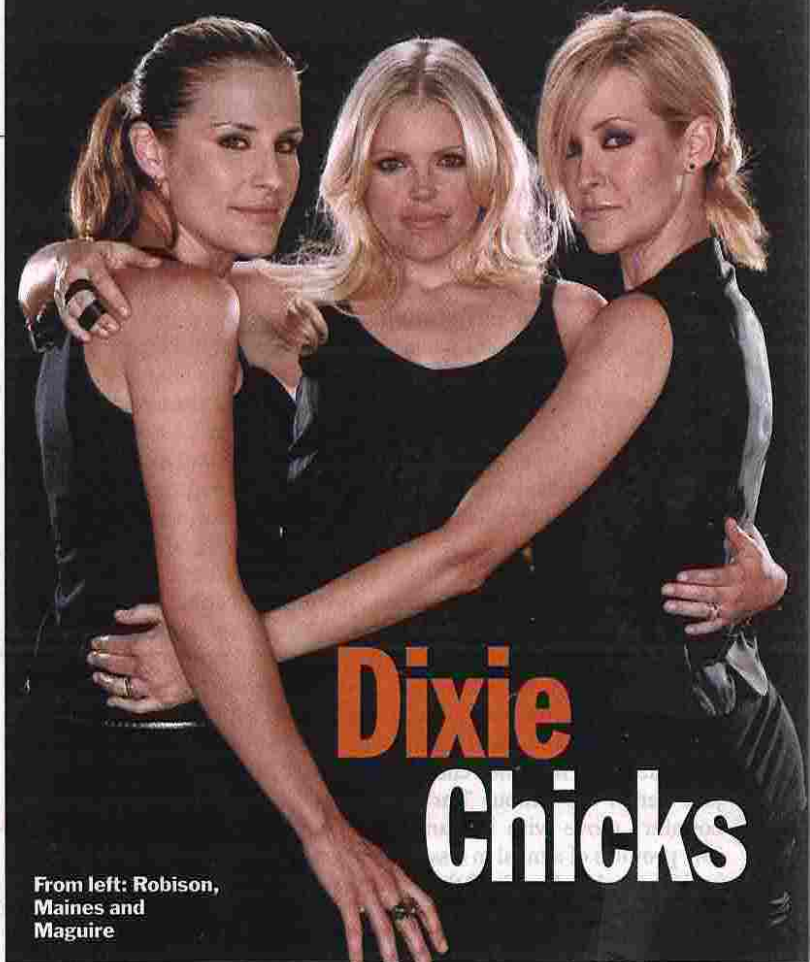
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## Country's Defiant Darlings

**O**NATALIE MAINES' 15 WORDS CAN'T TOP GEORGE Bush's 16—the ones about uranium in Niger—for political effect. But when the Dixie Chicks played London in 2003, 10 days before the Iraq invasion, and Maines said, “Just so you know, we’re ashamed the President of the United States is from Texas,” the tremors in the conservative country music scene were seismic. The Chicks, whose previous two CDs had hit No. 1 on both the pop and country charts, lost album sales and radio play. Some fans stomped their discs to bits.

Maines, 31, Emily Robison, 33, and Martie Maguire, 36, didn't cringe and curtsy. On their tart, tasty new album, *Taking the Long Way*, they make stands and take hostages. The title song sets a defiant tone (“Wouldn't kiss all the ass that they told me to”) that peaks in the CD's first single, the power-pop *Not Ready to Make Nice*. Maines' vocal intensity counters that of fans whose dotting curdled into death threats, including “a letter/ Sayin' that I better shut up and sing/ Or my life will be over.”

The Chicks, bless 'em, don't just carry a macrochip on their shoulders. There's instrumental virtuosity and a songwriting range that spans regions and decades. One country and one form of music aren't enough to contain them or stifle their passion. They'll sing but they won't shut up. That seems downright American. —By Richard Corliss



From left: Robison, Maines and Maguire