

Let Us All Praise the Dixie Chicks

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Who would have thought when the Dixie Chicks were selling more than 10 million copies each of “Wide Open Spaces” (1998) and “Fly” (1999) that they would become the most controversial band in America?

Even more improbable was the likelihood that three young women would have the strength of character and personality to stand their ground after the continuing uproar against them by scores of radio DJs and many of their fans.

What provoked the furor was a single sentence by their lead singer-Natalie Maines-uttered onstage in London ten days before Bush’s illegal, unconstitutional and fabricated invasion of Iraq on March 20, 2003.

Here is what Ms. Maines, a native Texan, said: “Just so you know, we’re ashamed the president of the United States is from Texas.”

Those fifteen words must have cost her and her fellow players, Emily Robinson and Martie Maguire, at least three million dollars a word so far. Most bands would have retreated, begged for forgiveness and eaten humble pie.

Not these ladies of steel. After taking some time out-Ms. Robison and Ms. Maguire had twins-the Dixie Chicks have come back with their new album “[Taking the Long Way](#)” which has topped the charts in its first two weeks. “We could have pandered,” said Ms. Maines to the New York Times. They did just the opposite. No apologies. Words of defiance and staying true to themselves flow through the lyrics.

In composing their songs, the remarkable Dixie Chicks told their record company that “We need to approach everything like not one radio station is going to play one single song.”

Conviction triumphed over commercialism. Ms. Maines, when asked about country radio, retorted “Do you really think we’re going to make an album for you and trust the future of our career to people who turned on us in a day?”

Well, it’s probably what many in the music industry thought they would do. Especially the DJs who boycotted playing their records after The Incident in 2003. You can imagine what these DJs thought when they first heard the first single “Not Ready to Make Nice,” which cries, “I’m not ready to back down/I’m still mad as hell.”

So more furor, more boycotts by DJs, and more backlash in some cities, leading to cancellations due to faltering concert sales. Dropped from their forthcoming North American

Accidents and Accusations Tour are St. Louis, Oklahoma City, Indianapolis and Memphis.

No doubt, when music fans don't hear the songs on their favorite radio stations, tickets sales will not be as robust. The DJs, a mixed breed apart, were not talking, just boycotting. It was not clear whether they themselves wanted to boycott or whether they were just reacting to outraged E-Mails and calls. Either way, it doesn't deter the Dixie Chicks who are showing they say what they mean and mean what they say.

Now take a larger frame of reference.

For the Dixie Chicks it meant not backing down on an issue of free speech. On March 12, 2003, Ms. Mines explained why she spoke the sentence: "I feel the president is ignoring the opinion of many in the U.S. and alienating the rest of the world. My comments were made in frustration, and one of the privileges of being an American is you are free to voice your own point of view."

Lots of Americans were frustrated. Groups representing millions of Americans-veterans, labor, women, students, religionists, business, and others-asked to meet with President Bush before the invasion. The American Caesar turned them all down. He knew it all. Then he blew it all and millions of Iraqis and tens of thousands of Americans are paying a severe price for this pig-headed corporate militarist.

Hundreds of thousands gone or wounded, sickened, homeless in Iraq. Fifty thousand American soldiers wounded, sickened or chronically mentally traumatized. And in the next few days, the twenty-five hundredth American soldier will lose his or her life over there.

The Iraq war-quagmire continues its devastating drain on American taxpayers-tax dollars drained away from being used for life and health and other necessities here at home.

The National Council of Churches is now urging its member churches to ring the bells of remembrance on the tragic occasion of the twenty-five hundredth fatality. Over 65% of the American people are opposed to the War.

Retired Generals, diplomats and national security advisers have spoken against this boomerang war imperiling our national security. But the carnage continues on the orders of the two draft-dodgers George W. Bush and Dick Cheney.

Compare all these cruel Bush deeds to the mild words of the Dixie Chicks. Compare all this, plus the Bush corporation's refusal to stand for the rights of workers and consumers-their health, safety and economic well-being, as he cuts taxes again and again for the wealthy and himself.

Compare the huge taxes that will be paid for the massive Bush deficit by the children of those music fans angry at the Dixie Chicks.

While they keep standing up for George W. Bush, does it ever occur to them to demand that George W. Bush stand up for them?

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