

# New Dixie Chicks DVD may make concert tix a lot harder to come by

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**A**cademy award-winning director Barbara Kopple has an uncanny sense of timing. Long before Natalie Maines insulted President Bush at a concert in London, sparking a domestic controversy back home, Kopple and her friend Cecilia Peck were angling to do a film about the country trio.

After all, it's not every day that you find legions of starstruck females practically salivating over other females. This a demographic that for the most part lies quietly beneath the media radar, like Sleeping Beauty waiting to be kissed.

In 1982, when Kopple snagged an Oscar for her absorbing look at a meat packers strike in Min-



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Martie Maguire represents the band's softer, emotional side.

nesota, her grasp of the medium was unmistakable. That film was called *The American Dream*.

And while any filmmaker can string together images and audio into a coherent script, it's a lot harder to transform the spirit of your subject into that same rolling stream of pixels.

Kopple makes the feat seem like child's play in *Shut Up and Sing!*, which was released on DVD February 20th.

Weaving together raw footage taken by five different cinematographers, in addition to archived material, the director tracks the band through the three contentious years following Maines anti-war comment in London.

It's a hell of a ride, too. For

we discover that Martie Maguire, Emily Robison and Natalie Maines are more than just three women in a bind.



From London to Dublin to Sydney, to Greenville, South Carolina, to Los Angeles, the film takes us backstage, onstage, through a rolling cow pasture, even inside the hospital delivery room where Robison is giving birth to twins.

And then there's that concert in Dallas where Natalie Maines was supposed to be shot. In her interview with Democracy Now's Amy Goodman (see main story), Kopple said everyone was tense that night. There was a deployment of Texas Rangers inside the

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**Senator's Cameo:** In a clip from a Senate hearing in **Shut Up and Sing!**, California Sen. Barbara Boxer accused broadcast executives of sending a "chilling message" to artists that they shouldn't criticize the President.

hall. Outside, fans were screened at the turnstyle with metal detectors.

"You can sort of see Natalie on the stage," Kopple explains, "and Martie and Emily sort of move a little far away from her, because you just get up there and you feel so naked. There's nothing that can be done, but they knew if they didn't go on, that people could get away with anything they wanted to."

Strangely, the documentary received an R-rating from the motion picture ratings folks. Kopple and Peck (who is the daughter of the late actor Gregory Peck) have appealed that decision. Other than several utterances of the F-word, there's virtually nothing in *Shut Up and Sing!* that would put it in the same league as movies like *Kill Bill*.

To the contrary, this is the kind of production that should be required viewing for all adolescents. With its superb role models and fable-like premise, the moral of this drama may be that sticks and stones can break their bones but hee-hee-hee, the Dixie Chicks are making like \$50 million dollars a year in record/DVD sales and touring, dude!

God bless America.

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