

The Providence Journal

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6/23/2016

Lady Antebellum brings 'pop country' to Dunkin' Donuts Center

Grammy-winning trio will perform in Providence on Tuesday as part of the CVS Health Charity Classic.



"Country music trio Lady Antebellum sits comfortably on the pop end of the country spectrum, where they've enjoyed considerable success, including a string of hit singles, and seven Grammys. If you listen to their recent single "Long Stretch of Love," it sounds like a lost Fleetwood Mac song.

No musician likes categories, but Lady Antebellum member Charles Kelley is fine with the "pop country" label.

"We love pop music. We love rock 'n' roll," he said in a phone interview. "We're living in a playlist generation, and we're just as big fans of Justin Timberlake as we are of George Jones. The [country] genre is ever-changing."

OK, but what makes Lady Antebellum country? It's the stories within the songs, Kelley said. Country songs need to tell stories, while pop songs can get by on a beat and a good hook.

Lady Antebellum, which consists of Kelley, Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood, comes to the Dunkin' Donuts Center in Providence on Tuesday, June 28, for a benefit concert sponsored by the CVS Health Charity Classic golf tournament. Lee DeWyze, season nine winner of "American Idol," will be the opening act. Tournament chairperson Eileen Boone said this is the first time in the 18-year history of the event that it has included a concert.

She said it's a way for the CVS Classic to expand its fundraising efforts to a larger group of people. Boone said the net proceeds from the concert will go to nonprofit organizations throughout New England supported by the CVS Classic. She said Lady Antebellum will perform for a reduced fee.

Kelley, who comes from Augusta, Georgia, home of The Masters tournament, said he hopes to play in the pro-am portion of the CVS Classic on Sunday. Lady Antebellum formed in Nashville in 2006 and made its debut in 2007 as guest vocalists on Jim Brickman's "Never Alone," before signing a record deal with Capitol Nashville. The band's first album, "Lady Antebellum," was released in 2008.

Hillary Scott is the daughter of country singer Linda Davis; Charles Kelley is the brother of singer Josh Kelley. It was Charles who convinced his old middle-school classmate Haywood to move to Nashville from Georgia in 2006.

Kelley said the name Lady Antebellum came when the band was having pictures taken in front of pre-Civil War mansions outside of Nashville. (Antebellum means "before the war.") Someone wondered if there might be ghosts haunting the mansions, perhaps the spirit of one of the women who lived there — "Lady Antebellum."

It seemed like a good name for a band.

In 2015, after the release of their album "747" the previous year, Lady Antebellum members announced they were taking a hiatus. But it wasn't exactly a vacation. Kelley made a solo record, which he described as having a "California country feel."

After being in a band for almost 10 years, I think it's natural to try something different," Kelley said.

Scott recorded a gospel album with her family. On Monday, she told "Good Morning America" that she had suffered a miscarriage last fall. She said the experience inspired her to write "Thy Will," the first single from her gospel album, "Love Remains," due for release July 29.

Despite the solo projects, Kelley was quick to say that there's no danger of Lady Antebellum breaking up.

"Lady A is always going to be the main focus. ... I think we'll always be together. I want to do this for another 20, 30 years," he said.

As soon as he finished his phone interview with The Providence Journal, Kelley said, he was going into the studio to work on the vocals for the new Lady Antebellum album, the follow-up to "747."

One of the band's trademarks is its three-part harmonies, and Kelley said the band tries to avoid too much studio wizardry, because they need to be able to sing those parts in their live shows.

Lady Antebellum plays the Dunkin' Donuts Center on Tuesday, June 28, at 7:30 p.m. Ticket prices range from \$37.50 to \$67.50, available at the Dunkin' Donuts Center box office, ticketmaster.com or (800) 745-3000.