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Nashville Scene

KEN TUCKER ktucker@billboard.com

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NOV
24
2007

Civil Service

Music Row Songwriters Enlist In New Band

There's a tried-and-true adage in Nashville that it all begins with a song. In the case of new Capitol Records Nashville trio **Lady Antebellum**, it began with several.

It was music that brought **Hillary Scott**, **Charles Kelley** and **Dave Haywood** together. Well, music and some flirtation.

Scott is the daughter of Grammy Award-winning artist **Linda Davis**, who is best-known for her duet with **Reba McEntire**, "Does He Love You." She and husband **Lang Scott** were part of McEntire's band until 2000. While still in high school, Hillary Scott joined the family Christmas show at Nashville's Opryland Hotel and was instantly hooked. She remembers thinking, "This is really what I want to do for a living."

Charles Kelley—the younger brother of pop artist **Josh Kelley**—and Haywood attended middle school and high school together in Augusta, Ga. After enrolling at the University of Georgia, where they both studied finance, they began collaborating on songs.

At the urging of his brother, Kelley moved to Nashville after graduation, and Haywood followed a year later. "We didn't really know what was going to happen, but we knew we wanted to write music and see where it took us," Kelley says.

With the guidance of award-winning singer/songwriter **Victoria Shaw**, Scott garnered a buzz as a solo artist. But a major-label deal fell through in March 2006, coincidentally around the same time Haywood moved to town.

A few months later, at a downtown Nashville music spot, Scott recognized Kelley, whose music she had been enjoying on his MySpace page. Kelley asked for her number and promised they could write together. "A classic Nashville pickup line," he laughs now.

A chemistry emerged, and once the trio started writing, it was inseparable for months. Studio wizard Haywood produced and played every instrument on the early demos. "We could write a song at lunch time and have it

done as a demo that night," Scott says.

It didn't immediately occur to them that their collaborations would turn into something more. "It was a good two or three months of writing songs before the thought crossed our mind of starting a band together," Scott says.

A performance at a small Nashville club in August 2006 sealed the deal. "It only took one live performance to realize that whatever it was we were going to do had to be done together," Scott says.

Within a few months, they went from playing for a few dozen people to singing at the Grand Ole Opry. A just-for-fun photo shoot in Civil War-era clothing led to the band's name.

This March the trio signed with manager **Gary Borman (Faith Hill, Keith Urban)**, and a month later, Capitol Nashville was onboard.

Lady Antebellum's debut album, tentatively scheduled for a spring 2008 release, is being produced by **Paul Worley (Big & Rich, Martina McBride)** and Shaw. The band's diverse influences, which range from the **Allman Brothers** to **Keith Urban** to **Gladys Knight**, have resulted in a record that at once conjures classic country, soulful R&B and a singer/songwriter vibe. "It's like a Neapolitan blend of all these flavors," Haywood says.

The album is a mix of the trio's songs and a few from outside contributors. Lady Antebellum wrote powerful debut single "Love Don't Live Here," currently at No. 37 on Hot Country Songs after six weeks on the chart, while Shaw penned the playful and uptempo "Love's Lookin' Good on You" with **Jason Deere** and **Matthew Thomas Lopez**.

Kelley and Scott share lead vocal duties and even duet on some songs, which provides a unique and interesting dynamic. Power ballad "All We'd Ever Need" features an emotional vocal interplay that falls somewhere between **Stevie Nicks/Tom Petty** and **Crystal Gayle/Eddie Rabbitt**.

Lady A, as they were dubbed by early fans, have opened shows for **Carrie Underwood** and **Josh Turner**, among others, and will tour with **Martina McBride** beginning in January.



LADY ANTEBELLUM