

Weekend



Charles Kelley, Hillary Scott, Dave Haywood by USA TODAY

Lady
AntebellumCountry trio
on the verge, 8E

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'Lookin' for a Good Time'? Trio found more than that

They're racking up more success with latest country single

By Brian Mansfield
Special for USA TODAY

Song of the South: Country trio Lady Antebellum's name conjures images of the Old South, but Hillary Scott, Charles Kelley and Dave Haywood have a more modern bent. The group — whose first single, *Love Don't Live Here*, peaked at No. 4 on USA TODAY's country airplay chart this spring — draws heavily from '70s classic rock, pop and R&B, including the Allman Brothers and James Brown. "We pulled from that Georgia stuff we grew up with," says Haywood, 26. "We threw it together and tried to make something of it." New single *Lookin' for a Good Time* is No. 33 and rising. A self-titled album made its debut atop the country charts in April and has sold almost 200,000 copies.

And then there were three: Kelley and Haywood met as kids at Riversday Middle School in Evans, Ga. Years later, after working outside of music proved unfulfilling, Kelley moved to Nashville to live with his brother, pop singer Josh Kelley; pal Haywood soon followed. The two met Scott, who was pursuing a solo career, at a popular music bar called 12th & Porter. "Dave and I were writing with her just to get a cut on her record," says Kelley, 26. Things changed once the three began performing together. "It didn't take but one show and we knew that this was what we needed to do," he says.

That's why the Lady is a band: The trio came up with its name after an early publicity shoot using a pre-Civil War Southern mansion as a backdrop. They knew the trio's male/female lead vocals might confuse people expecting Lady Antebellum to be a girl

group. "That was partly why we thought it was cool," says Haywood. **Like mother, like daughter:** Scott's mom is Linda Davis, who recorded the Grammy-winning duet *Does He Love You* with Reba McEntire when Scott was 7. Scott recently sang her mother's part with McEntire at a concert in Bloomington, Ill. "I tried so hard to get in character like my mom," says Scott, now 22. "I remember looking across the stage, trying to give Reba an evil look, and I'm thinking, 'This is Reba McEntire,' and I busted a huge smile." **Does love live here?** According to Scott, "I'm not dating either of the guys, and they're not dating each other." But that doesn't mean no one considered the possibility. Kelley admits to using "We should write together" as a pickup line when he met Scott. "Maybe she'd come over, we'd write a song, then my next move would be to ask her to dinner." But the writing session went so successfully, Kelley de-

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—Dave Haywood

cided not to mess things up by pursuing a romantic relationship. "Now, it's like brothers and sisters," he says. "It'd be kind of gross."

Early accolades: By the time *Love Don't Live Here* peaked on the charts, Lady Antebellum already had received its first major award nomination, as the Academy of Country Music's top new duo or group. The group's debut album had been out barely a month when they won. "I literally cannot remember what happened after they called our names," Kelley says. "I've had to watch the video back about 15 times, just to make sure it happened."

On the Verge >> Lady Antebellum

An occasional feature spotlighting breakthrough artists



A Lady with gentlemen: Charles Kelley, left, Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood.