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## **Lady Antebellum Talk Radio 'Fatigue,' Necessary Hiatus and New Album**

"There was not a lot of excitement for new singles," says Dave Haywood, who returns reenergized with his bandmates for the album 'Heart Break'

In 2015, Lady Antebellum was burning out. They were six studio albums and seven years of nonstop touring into a hugely successful career, but their last two singles – "Freestyle" and "Long Stretch of Love" – failed to resonate with fans, both peaking at Number 16 on Billboard's Country Airplay chart. Stymied, the Grammy-wining trio pulled that classic band-in-crisis move: they quietly announced a "short hiatus."

"I think we started noticing just a little bit of Lady Antebellum fatigue from radio and the listeners," says singer Charles Kelley, who makes up the group with vocalist Hillary Scott and multi-instrumentalist Dave Haywood.

"There was not a lot of excitement for new singles," agrees Haywood.

"It was kind of like, 'Oh yeah, Lady Antebellum,'" says Kelley, rolling his eyes. "It didn't feel as anticipated as it was before, and I think that just naturally happens with any artist as you're going onto your fifth or sixth record. It was like, 'Ok, we're ready for some new freshness.'"

Fans wondered if the break, coupled with the members' respective solo projects, signaled the end for the Grammy-winning trio. But nearly a year and a half later, the hiatus came to an official halt on January 19th with the release of the new single "You Look Good."

The funky track is the first taste of Heart Break, their latest album due June 9th. Returning revitalized and with fresh perspective, the group has proudly proclaimed the record the spiritual follow-up to their 2010 breakthrough Need You Now, which was named Best Country Album at the 2011 Grammy Awards.

Speaking with Rolling Stone Country in a busy Nashville restaurant just a day after the group previewed new songs in a jubilant Facebook Live concert, the three members of Lady A say it's as if they've turned back time and rediscovered why they make music in the first place.

"We've gone from feeling obligation to feeling appreciation," says Haywood, to some impressed looks from his bandmates.

"Did your wife come up with that?" jokes Kelley.

It was their growing families, in fact, that necessitated the hiatus. All three have young children and, along with being stuck in a loop of travel and promotion, they lacked the creative energy they had grown accustomed to as a band.

## **"All of our individual work made us a lot pickier. We weren't going to settle for 'almost great'**

To reignite that spark, each dove into solo projects: Kelley released the critically well-received *The Driver* last February; Scott recorded the Grammy-nominated gospel album *Love Remains* with her mother Linda Davis and family; and Haywood expanded his producer résumé, overseeing the debut EP by Post Monroe.

The time spent apart, and with their families, was restorative and informs *Heart Break*, the title of which winks at their hiatus.

"The break was exactly what we needed," says Kelley. "I can't wait for people to hear the record, just the sound of it."

Says Haywood: "We didn't know creatively where we were going to land, and none of these songs were written six months ago. All we had was a plan of, 'We need to be together, live together, write together and work together.'"

As such, the group spent time in writing hideaways in Nashville, Los Angeles and on the beach in Florida, immersing themselves in the 24/7 creative process that they'd been overlooking the past few years. With no deadline, they let themselves wander into new sounds, and eventually embraced a producer with a reputation for shaking things up – busbee, the studio boss behind Maren Morris' Grammy-nominated *Hero* album.

"The best decision was how we took these crazy curves that took us to busbee," Kelley says.

"We had gone down some different roads, and before, with the time constraints, we probably would have just kept going down that road, instead of [saying], 'Man, we know this isn't right.'"

"You Look Good" is propelled by blasts of brassy horns (a first for the band), the title track

"Heart Break" is a girl-power anthem with a touch of darkness and a clever play on words, and

"Somebody Else's Heart" is full of desire and regret. But it's "This City," a sparkling duet between Kelley and Scott about the flush of new love that evokes classic Lady A.

"I feel like all of our individual work made us a lot pickier," Scott says of the song choices. All but two tracks were co-written by the trio. "We weren't going to settle for 'almost great,' and unless we really loved it, we weren't going to do it."

Kelley stresses they weren't chasing hits – a dangerous practice for any artist, especially one with such cross-genre past success. When they did find themselves tempted to take the easy way to radio play, busbee was there to rein them in.

"We wrote a couple down at the beach that sounded like hits, but busbee was like, 'Does it get you going? Do you want to listen to this?'" says Kelley. "And it was like, 'No ... but it's a hit.'"

"I was like, 'Actually, when I listen to the ones we wrote [at the beach], I skip that one,'" says Scott. "So you get honest about it."

With the hiatus in their rearview, the group is now looking ahead – and liking what they see. The You Look Good World Tour kicks off May 26th in Bakersfield, California, and will visit six countries on three continents. That's a lot of travel, especially with children in tow, but Lady Antebellum are now aware that they always have an exit strategy should they need it.

"The good outweighs the bad so much more," says Haywood of the collective mood in the face of tireless touring. "Playing those few songs [during the Facebook show], I haven't felt that excited in five years. It was almost an out-of-body experience."

Kelly echoes that sentiment and says that old energy they used to feel from fans and radio alike is back.

"It's been blowing my mind," he says.