



(5.16.17) http://www.bakersfield.com/entertainment/lady-antebellum-needs-bakersfield-now-and-they-re-bringing-kelsea/article_fa47af5b-515a-5475-b532-1f699990658b.html

Lady Antebellum needs Bakersfield now and they're bringing Kelsea Ballerini too!

By CESAREO GARASA For The Californian May 16, 2017 0

How much does Lady Antebellum love Bakersfield? Enough to spend several days here next week to rehearse for the trio's upcoming world tour, which kicks off at Rabobank Arena on May 26.

"Every time we performed (in Bakersfield) it's been awesome," said lead vocalist Hillary Scott. "We performed at the Crystal Palace early on in our career and that was such a bucket list moment, you know? Just the musical history there in Bakersfield with Buck Owens. We're almost selfishly excited to start off the tour there and it'll be a great way to set the tone for the rest of the tour."

Packing the powerhouse country-pop lineup that night is breakout star Kelsea Ballerini ("Love Me Like You Mean It," "Dibs"), who played at Buck Owens Crystal Palace in 2015, just as she was climbing up the charts. Brett Young ("Sleep Without You," "In Case You Didn't Know") opens the evening.

But all eyes will be on the reunited Lady A, following a hiatus in 2016, when two of the members pursued solo projects: Charles Kelley released "The Driver," and Scott won a Grammy for her Contemporary Christian album, "Love Remains." Now back with third member Dave Haywood, the group is set to release "Heart Break," their seventh studio album, on June 9. Their first single, "You Look Good," doubles as the name of the new tour, which gets its debut at the Bakersfield arena.

"This is one of the most exciting seasons of our life as a band and this new album, and just being able to really kick off this tour, share this new music before it can be in your hands with everyone in Bakersfield," Scott said. "We are just so humbled with the opportunity and we're so excited to be there. Hopefully, everyone will come out. Bring the whole family and let's make a memory."

Scott didn't go into great detail about the stage setup, other than to say it's "huge." They're still working on the set list, which will include a mix of old favorites — the career-making "Need You Know," naturally — new material and possibly some of their solo material.

"I don't want to give away everything, but we are definitely working on a really special moment that all the fans will be excited about. Just kind of the story of where we've been and where we're headed."

"Heart Break" represents both an evolution and return to form for the group, whose gift for modern country torch songs is on display in "Somebody Else's Heart." The bouncy "This City" brightens things up, showing off the band's sprightly side.

The album has an almost defiantly hopeful streak running through most of its 13 tracks, especially on the arena-ready anthem, "Good Time to be Alive," imparting harmony both musically and symbolically.

"For me, the album is optimistic, it's empowering, it's positive," Scott said. "There's a lot of things we can look outside of ourselves: on the news, online, on our own social media pages. You don't have to search very far to

find negativity. ... We wanted to be honest and authentic to who we are as a band. With 'Good Time to be Alive,' it's like we're all here right now for a reason, and let's enjoy it. Let's celebrate that and join in this life together, hand in hand, and really try to focus on the positive.

"Our dream is that the crowd will become our angel choir on that one."

Even the title track, "Heart Break," is less a tale of woe than a cheerful ode to giving one's heart a break for a summer — kind of like the band itself did.

"You know, what's really so cool to me is when we all sat together and decided that we were kind of gonna just take some rest time because we were hitting the ground so hard and fast for nine years, we really had a timeline already set," Scott said. "It was never an uncertain amount of time. We knew that at the end of that year (2016) everything was going to reconvene so we had that to look forward to and that to prepare for."

"The one thing that we didn't know, though, was how long it was going to take to really see and feel and create the album and have it come together in a way that we felt was really right."

The single "You Look Good," with its funky, percolating mid-tempo feel and horn-line, is Lady Antebellum's own version of "Fame"-era David Bowie. The three used their renewed energy to fearlessly try some new sounds.

And with more country songs blurring genre lines, are genre representations passé? What makes a song country music? Is it the lyrical content? Vocal inflection? Instrumentation? What makes a song at its core a country song and not just a rock song with fiddle and banjo?

"I think it's a combination of all those things," Scott said. "I think there's a lot of artists (where) all those influences can't help but work their way in, and into the way you write and to the way you record and sonically what you want to hear when you're recording. But I think the thing about country music that should and will forever hold true is being authentic, being genuine. "

Fans may have some Lady A sightings while the members rehearse at Rabobank Arena in the days before the show. Scott asked about family-friendly excursions for her little girl, which is a departure from how the band used to spend their time on tour — namely in karaoke bars.

"In the early days when Charles and Dave and I were just starting as a band, we would go out and karaoke and Charles and I would always do 'Summer Lovin' or 'Islands in the Stream,' (by) Kenny Rogers and Dolly Parton. But now for me, specifically, it would probably be 'How Far I'll Go,' from (the movie) 'Moana'... we do a lot of 'Moana' karaoke at our house for our 4-year-old. I love 'I Love Rock 'n' Roll,' too."

Now Lady Antebellum songs are among the karaoke choices.

"When I think about going out with my girlfriends to sing karaoke over the years and looking through the book to pick what my go-to jam is going to be, whether it's a slow jam or faster song, and to think that what's happening that these incredible people are picking our song to want to (sing) is a huge compliment absolutely."