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After break, Lady Antebellum back with new album, new tour — and a San Diego stop

Dave Haywood is a self-proclaimed guitar nerd who likes to talk for hours about Lady Antebellum's studio work — how different guitar tones and drum sounds are used on the band's new release, "Heart Break."

And don't get him started about the horns, but more about that later.

This is a 20-minute phone conversation during a long day of interviews from Tennessee, where rehearsals and press demands are wrapping up before Lady A begins a 65-date world tour that visits San Diego County on Sunday at the Mattress Firm Amphitheatre in Chula Vista.

The band announced two years ago that it would take a break after its Wheels Up Tour, and some listeners may have wondered if the platinum-selling trio consisting of Haywood, Charles Kelley and Hillary Scott intended to part ways after years of accomplishments.

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From 2008 to 2013, the band garnered multiple honors, among them seven Grammy Awards, four American Music Awards and eight Academy of Country Music Awards for albums such as "Own the Night" and "Need You Now."

Scott recorded a gospel album with her family (the 2017 Grammy Award-winning "Love Remains"), Kelley released a solo album ("The Driver"), and Haywood taught guitar and wrote material for other bands.

Within the past few years, three children have been born to the group's 30-something members: a girl for Scott in 2013, a boy for Haywood in 2014, and a boy for Kelley in 2015, just like the Lady A lineup.

Haywood said that being a parent enriches everyone's life and adds a more profound sensibility to the songwriting process, but touring is more difficult.

"You are a lot more intentional about your time," Haywood says. "When you are working, you want to make it count because you could be home with your child. So honestly, in making this record, our spouses said: 'You know what? It's time for you all to reconnect as a band, so go figure it out and make music.' "

The time off was all about taking family time, exploring individual creativity and "giving fans a chance to miss us."

"The whole process has been re-energizing and refreshing for us," Haywood says.

“We were living in a house in Florida for a few weeks and had the time of our lives, reconnecting as a band, as friends and as a songwriting team. We made it count. In the first four days, we wrote nine songs.”

The album’s title song is an interesting play on words, based on the idea of taking time to be alone rather than jumping into a different relationship — essentially, giving the heart a break.

“The title I had in my phone was ‘A Heart Break Summer,’ ” Haywood recalls.

“Everyone knows a serial dater, and as soon as I explained it, we all started to throw out ideas. Everything is unanimous for us as a band. We all want to weigh in. I love figuring out the best chord progressions and how you make a verse cool and how you make a chorus explode musically.”

So, back to those horns.

The first single from the album “Heart Break,” the sexy, soulful “You Look Good,” is punctuated with a horn section. And a few of the songs the band performs from its past repertoire will also feature brass.

“Having a horn section on tour is totally brand new for us,” Haywood says.

“It takes things to a new level because we’ve added horns to some of our older songs, like “Downtown” and “Looking for a Good Time,” and it fits perfectly. It’s fun. Be ready for the horns.”

“Heart Break” includes the talents of different songwriters and the influence of producer busbee (aka Mike Busbee), which increases Lady A’s crossover appeal.

But the band remains intent on preserving its country voice.

“I think it’s the core of who we are as people,” Haywood says.

“We feel like our music resonates because we try to tell the stories we have been through and try to talk about everyday life. For us, that’s the core of country music.”