



(5.31.17) <http://www.vulture.com/2017/05/lady-antebellum-heart-break.html>

EXCLUSIVE

## Lady Antebellum Want to Cement Their Place As Legends of Country

By Luke McCormick



"We're never going to be some hot new thing," Lady Antebellum's Charles Kelley says on the phone from Nashville. It's kind of a "no duh" statement from a dude in a band that's already sold millions upon millions of records, but staying fresh is only one of a multitude of things on the Lady Antebellum singer and guitarist's mind these days. The band's upcoming sixth LP, *Heart Break*, which is out June 9 on Capitol Records Nashville, is a huge pop album disguised as a country record. The songs contain massive hooks accented with tales of broken hearts and small-town living, but as a whole it's a contagious, wide-reaching statement. The band even injects some funk via massive horn blasts on the single "You Look Good." Kelley, along with bandmates Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood are now focused on trying to become a legendary band, the kind that people drop everything to go see.

For *Heart Break* the trio decamped to California to record with producer busbee (who has produced and written for everyone from Maren Morris to Toni Braxton to Garth Brooks) to get away from Nashville and recapture the simpler times of the band's earlier days. After years of constant touring and recording, and starting families, the band began to miss the intense closeness of their early days. For them, long nights of telling old tales and a newfound tolerance for whiskey brought them right back to the beginning.

Hear a premiere of their new song "The Stars," and read our interview below.

This record is a bit of a departure for the band, right?

Definitely. We wrote 11 of the 13 tracks. That's the most we've written since our debut. For so long we've been a band that does the old "release an album, go on the road, release an album, immediately get on the road again" [thing]. So after our last big tour we decided to take about a year-and-a-half hiatus. We were all longing for a bit of freedom in the recording process. Give us some more time with our families and new little ones.

It gave you some more time to just live.

That time and freedom just gave us more and stronger material to choose from this time around. With all of us

starting our own families we wanted to be able to write from an honest place where people could connect with us. We wanted to make sure this was a personal record from us.

You wanted it to be a personal record but also connect with people, do you feel the experiences you guys wrote about are shared by your listeners?

I think we are all longing for love. That's a constant that's running through our music. That's the place we write from. Now it can take the form of a song like "Stars" where we're writing about our actual children, even to them. Just universal messages to them like, "We'll always be here for you." I think writing from actual specific moments in our lives can give fans a snapshot of us, knowing what headspace we were in.

Did tackling a majority of the songwriting present any problems as a band or was it seamless getting back into that pocket?

Not the writing part, but one challenge was picking up and leaving Nashville for Southern California where we holed up, just the three of us, to write and record. We've always been close, but as you get older and gain more responsibilities you inevitably pull away from those closest to you. All three of us have gotten married and started families in the past few years. This got us back to the way things started as a band. Us recording under the same roof.

So this was strictly a trip to record?

[Our families] sometimes came in and out on the weekends, but really it was just the band getting reconnected and drinking too much. Recording, drinking, and telling old stories. It was busbee's idea for us to get out there and get out of our usual routine. We usually write all the songs at someone's house and then bring them to the studio ready to record. But in California, like with the song "Stars," we wrote and recorded the entire song, right there in the studio. It was a totally different process for us. We felt like a regular rock or pop band writing and then recording during studio time. It was almost serene in that way.

Did you have a go-to California cocktail?

I stuck with whiskey. All that dark liquor isn't the best thing for you. Around 2 or 3 o'clock it'd be cocktail time. It was just part of the environment. We were feeling it and I think you get those good vibes on the record. Even though I probably gained ten pounds out there.

Were all three of you game when busbee suggested leaving Nashville for a bit?

Hell yeah! It was freezing in Nashville at the time so we were ready. We have always talked about doing something like this but schedules never really allowed for it. You always hear about a rock band recording in a castle or something, and we thought, why not us? It wasn't a castle, but we did it.

Did anything surprising come out of the time there? No one aired any grievances or anything?

We didn't have any of that. I keep basically saying this, but it was just such a positive vibe. I guess I did learn that I can drink more than I thought I could. But we know each other's buttons and when to stop pushing them. If anything, it was a surprise how close we still are.

We definitely talked about the state we are in as a band and recognizing we're never going to be brand-new again. Now it's our chance to be a band people can rely on. One that puts on solid shows and makes music they can relate to. We want to be like Tim McGraw. Like, you HAVE to see a Tim McGraw show because you know it's going to be the best night. We'd talk about not chasing new sounds and artists coming out in country. That wouldn't be authentic.

The new record is personal and hopeful and even jubilant at times. With the current climate our country is in, and the rough times a good deal of your fan base is facing, does it ever strike you to touch on more political themes?

As a band, and even as people, we're not the most political. I think we'll leave it up to U2 and Bruce Springsteen to address that. It's not who we are. Even with a new song like "Good Time to Be Alive" it's still saying that this is a crazy world we live in, but it's still a good time to be alive. We'll always have hard times as a country and as people that we go through, but hey, as long as you hang on to love and friendship and those moments. It's good to be breathing.

