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## Lady Antebellum Regroups To Deliver Personal New Album 'Heart Break'

From "Good Time to Be Alive" to "Home," the trio's latest set of songs returns to their roots.



After a short hiatus, Lady Antebellum is back together and ready to release their sixth studio album, "Heart Break." The record is one of the group's most personal yet, as they penned 11 out of the 13 songs in the set while on writing destinations in Florida and California.

"Carving out time is just so valuable when it comes to the creative process," band member Dave Haywood told HuffPost. "We wanted to commit to it this time around, so this record was born in California and Florida and we finished it here in Nashville."

Haywood, Charles Kelley and Hillary Scott have been together for over a decade, so they're aware of the music industry's ups and downs. After Kelley released his Grammy-nominated solo album "The Driver" and Scott debuted a record with her family, the trio was refreshed and decided to get back to it last year. They rented homes, stayed under one roof, and wrote until they couldn't write any more alongside their producer, busbee, who helmed Maren Morris' critically acclaimed "Hero."

"It was fun to work with someone different just to literally come up with different sounds and mix the process up," Kelley said.

Lady A and their special guests Kelsea Ballerini and Brett Young are now out on the You Look Good Tour, which will make stops in the United States, the United Kingdom and South Africa.

Below, read our Q&A with Haywood, Kelley and Scott and find out more about their exciting new album, "Heart Break."

Happy Lady A is back with some new music, but I have to say I loved "The Driver," Charles. And Hillary, congrats on "Love Remains," the album with your family.

Hillary Scott: Aw, thank you so much.

Charles Kelley: That was always our plan. We were going to take the break more so as a time for us to do

whatever we wanted to do regardless. But this was always the focus and its fun to kind of be back home so to speak. It's the safety blanket for sure, Lady A.

You mention home but, for this album, you all traveled to California and Florida, right? To get out of your comfort zone and be a bit more creative.

Dave Haywood: Yeah. I think more than anything we wanted to be able to have each other's undivided attention from a creative standpoint. Songwriting is great when you can just dig in the whole day, stay up as late as you want — no schedule when it comes to writing music, a song is not done until you want it to be done. We needed that time to make this record and to write for it. Hillary had the idea to do a songwriter retreat in Florida, so we went down to Rosemary Beach, Florida, in the gulf and rented a house for a couple of weeks and had songwriters fly in and out from Nashville, and we just had a blast. It went so well that it was Charles' idea to go out to Los Angeles to continue the retreat of writing and recording out there.

CK: I think it was just a way for us to have our label pay for our vacation. [Laughs]

You guys wrote 11 of the 13 songs on the album.

CK: The most we've ever written for a record, I believe. Maybe our first record had close to that.

HS: I think that was 10.

CK: We really wanted a lot of our story in it and I think that was the main thing. We're super proud of the last few records we made, but definitely felt like we have so much more to talk about now with our families and kids and the amount of love and respect that we feel for our spouses, too. Songs like "Home," "Army" and "The Stars" came out of that, and those relationships and feelings. But we've still been able to pull from past experiences and heartbreak with songs like "Hurt" and "Heart Break." There's a lot of different conversations but we've said this is probably the most competent record we've made in a long time — just where there was no timeline, it wasn't going to be put out until we felt like it was right. And we're super proud of it.

You have been together for over 10 years, so how do you make sure your sound is fresh? What's your creative way of switching things up?

CK: I think that was one of the reasons we brought in busbee. We really loved the sounds of the Maren Morris record and busbee wrote "Our Kind of Love" with us early on. We always knew he was a true talent, but it was fun to work with someone different just to literally come up with different sounds and mix the process up so it's always important. On the flip side of that, it's also important for us to still feel like we're being authentic to our sound and what brought us to the table. We want our fans to gravitate toward our sound, hopefully, because it feels authentic.

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You mentioned Maren Morris and I got to shoutout to Hillary and all the country music gals killing the game right now.

HS: It's a really exciting time. Kelsea Ballerini being on tour with us this year, we're so excited about that and proud of her. Four really successful singles off of her debut album — being able to go four singles into an album, ever, but especially now, that's just such a feat in itself. I know her sophomore album is highly anticipated and I know I can't wait to hear it. It's just an interesting and exciting time in country music as a whole — just to be able to even be taking this tour — we're going to be in the U.K. and down in South Africa — how broad and wide the genre is. To be a part of it right now is just very, very exciting.

South Africa should be amazing.

DH: Country has really just continued to grow all around the world — we've done Australia and Europe a lot, but first time down to South Africa, so we couldn't be more excited.

Is it cool for you guys to see the growth of a genre that was born in Nashville, spread from there and is now beloved worldwide?

DH: I think country music has always been about life, and it's continuing to be discovered around the world because it's so relatable. Even when "Need You Now" was really hitting for us was when we started to discover all these other places that were finding out about us. With the internet, now you can hear everybody online. There were a lot of people before us who broke down those barriers – you know, Shania Twain, Garth Brooks, Kenny Rogers. A lot of these artists from country have gone around the world, so it's a really, really exciting time for the genre and we couldn't be more proud to wave the country music flag whenever we get to tour internationally.

Does it put more pressure on you to deliver knowing you have a huge array of fans out there?

CK: One thing we've learned is the fans can see through sometimes when we put out a single that didn't really represent us. We thought it might be a hit or what we needed, but I think what we've learned is to just really be as true to ourselves and the music as we can be and then accept whatever road it's going to take. And that's hard to do because sometimes you're going to have hits or you're going to have misses. But if it's something you believed in and it felt right at the time, put it out, and live with it and move on. We found that our die-hard fans will stick with us through all of it. And the international fans are really amazing about that, too, because they don't really have country radio in a lot of these places, so they just pretty much pick up your record and invest in all of it and love all those songs that a lot of people don't get to hear. For us, it's just make music we believe in and that inspires us and gets us up in the morning. After being in it for 10 years, you realize you can't control much in this business. All you really can control is the music and the rest will take whatever course it wants to take.

As a trio with different personalities and life experiences, how do you go about starting the songwriting process?

HS: It starts a bunch of different ways. For this record, in particular, we wanted to get back as close to the way that we started. The interesting thing is when we first started the band, we wrote kind of how we did for this record — in a house with no timeframe, staying up late, recording the work tape. We would really not have any set schedule to do anything other than write. And then our first record came out and we were touring and we were inspired by the touring life, so we started writing while on the road. As our families grew, that became more and more difficult to do efficiently and [it was hard] to be able to write as much as we hoped we would. So then, it was time to mix it up again, which was this record. We got out of our comfort zone and we recorded the back-half of the album in Nashville and the first-half in Los Angeles. Writing and getting away from our normal day-to-day routine allowed us to focus solely on the creative. I wasn't in my writing appointment thinking, "Oh my gosh, I got to go let my dogs out." Or, "What am I going to cook for dinner?" It was all very much that vacation mindset with a purpose of being solely creative, writing songs and bonding with my bandmates.

How has it been becoming parents, having a new outlook on life and sitting down, putting pen to paper, and getting those words out there?

CK: It puts life and all this stuff that you think is super important into perspective. You realize that nothing is more important than your health, your happiness and your family, you know? It's cliché to say, but it does. We knew it was important for us to write songs kind of celebrating our kids. "The Star" is a song about that. And then "Home" and "Army" are songs that are about our spouses who are the rockstars who keep us moving. We get the glory being out here onstage, but the truth is they are the reason our home life all remains stable. We're lucky. We have a good perspective now after being in this 10 years that you are going to be on many ups and downs throughout this career and it's very natural. When we see an artist that almost never makes a misstep, we wonder if they're human. [Laughs] We are very human. Dave will be the first one in rehab for sure. [All laugh]

Dave, do you want to elaborate on that comment a little bit?

DH: He's talking about all the Claritin and Zyrtec I take. [Laughs]

CK: It was an ironic statement because he's the healthiest.

DH: It will be a juicing rehab.

You have to be willing to take a backseat when you need to take a backseat and take charge when you need to take charge.

Charles Kelley on being in a group

What songs on the album are you proudest of?

DH: The one that kicked off the writing process was the title track "Heart Break." I was just excited for that one for a lot of reasons. It was such a great collaborative write. And it's such a fun play on the title, heart break being two separate words and the approach of the song is for you to take a break in relationships and not to just always jump from one relationship to the next. To have a breather in between so you can figure out a little more about yourself than jump into a relationship. Lyrically, it's fun when you have a play on words, and some people may hear it and see it as a spin on what they're thinking the song may be. But gosh, some of the ones that are other favorites are "Hurt" – the best vocals on Hillary in years. It's just a beautiful, beautiful vocal and a pretty deep and sad song, but again a true and honest lyric.

Dave, you play a lot of instruments and you all blend your voices so beautifully together. What's the process like to decide musically how the song is going to work?

CK: Very collaborative. We let each of us do what we do best. Dave, when it comes to musical decisions, knows what he's doing, and Hillary and I can hear something but we don't necessarily know how to execute it. Dave knows how to execute. Dave, you're the executor! [Laughs] But it's true. We have our roles and we fall into them. We don't even need to say anything, it just happens. We've been doing this for a while now and we know what each of us does best and know when we can't do something very well. [All laugh] You have to be willing to take a backseat when you need to take a backseat and take charge when you need to take charge.

It's nice to know that you guys don't fight over who's going to get the solo! How do you keep your friendship strong, though, as well as keep the band intact?

HS: If all three of our egos worked their way in to an unhealthy degree, the band would suffer. And I think there's just a grounding effect that happens because we've been in this together since the very beginning. Nobody knows me like Charles and Dave know me and it's the same for them, as well. So we don't let each other get away with much. [Laughs]

What's the vibe like between the three of you? Siblings? Or more friendship?

HS: I would say friendship with a shot of sibling.

DH: Yeah, there's definitely some sibling ...

CK: We can definitely get on each other's nerves.

DH: Even living in the houses together in Florida and California, we get along great, we're cooking meals together, making drinks together, staying up late – I mean we sat up most nights in Hollywood listening to old demos and talking about stories from our first few years of making music. It's a great collaboration between all three of us. Our families are so close, all of our kids —it's so cute when they play together on the road and on tour — so it's a great traveling family.

In the current political climate we're in, there's a lot of unrest everywhere but music tends to bring everyone together. When you guys are touring different states around the country, what's your goal?

DH: As fans of music, we love going to shows, as well. Music is an escape to get out there and forget about what's going on in your day-to-day life — the pressures of a job or whatever is going on. It is that escape. There's a new song we're introducing on tour called "It's a Good Time to Be Alive" and I think that sums up a lot of that

content, as well. You've got someone you love, you got someone special in your life, and we're all here together in this moment: it is a great time to be alive. We've been trying to make that our goal with our live show. It's supposed to be an experience, a big party, and I know that's the way I feel when I go to see shows. You've had a rough week, you want to have a great Friday night to kind of get away from it all and that's what we're out there trying to do.

What can we expect from the You Look Good Tour?

DH: Exciting music things for us as we have a new horn section coming out there with us. Musically, it will be a little different for those who have seen us in the past — once the horns come out, it always feels like a big party. This is the highest production we've had with lighting, as well, so some really neat visual elements and moving screens.

How do you decide which songs to perform?

CK: This year, we kind of came up with a medley of songs and hits into one. But it actually paces out pretty good with playing the biggest songs we've had plus our new material. We know what people are coming here to hear — they want to hear the songs they know really well and so obviously we'll play four or five songs off this new record but the majority of it will be our No. 1's and stuff. When I go to shows that's what I want to hear — I want to sing along! We're going to give the fans a little taste of anything.

"Heart Break" is available June 9.