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PREMIERES

Lady Antebellum Shares "Teenage Heart" Ahead of 'Heart Break'



By this point, Lady Antebellum have spent more years singing about teenage love than they spent experiencing it. Whatever works. On June 9 (that's tomorrow, folks), the country trio—Dave Haywood, Charles Kelley, and Hillary Scott—are set to release *Heart Break*, their sixth album. Here we're premiering one of its stand-out tracks, a Mumford-country recollection of innocence called "Teenage Heart." Haywood talked to us about how the song pushes limits and the connection between Donald Trump and the Nashville Predators. (It's deeper than the team name.)

Noisey: How did this song come about?

Dave Haywood: This whole record has been pieced together from a couple writing trips. First we were down in Florida for a couple weeks, living in a house together, and then we were out in Los Angeles, living in a house together all day long, cooking meals, mixing drinks, having a great time. We wrote this song out in the Hollywood Hills. We had a good buddy, Jon Green, come over to the house a couple times. He's an amazing songwriter, and we were hanging out, making some meals, swimming in the pool. We started working on this at one in the morning, I think. It was late at night and we were like, "Let's do something that's super energetic, that has a driving beat to it. An arena, stadium, amphitheater kind of song." Jon picked up the guitar and started pounding out a really fast chord progression. That

set the tone for where we wanted to go musically. Charles said, "Give me the fastest chord progression you've got!" The spirit of the song is reminiscent to the spirit of songs we wrote before: It's about nostalgia and looking back on teenage love. The first time you fall in love, when you're 14, 15, 16 years old, there's just that excitement that you cannot ever recreate. We tried to catch that lyrically and musically.

Jon's based in London. And as an American, I love that style that is so popular throughout the U.K., that Mumford and Sons or Coldplay four-on-the-floor, highly energetic music. Jon knows how to tap into that really well.



The drums on "Teenage Heart" start with that four-on-the-floor, then you add some syncopation, then they culminate with a big four-on-the-floor conclusion. How did you work that out, particularly within the confines of a country song?

Jon brought over some of his gear—his laptop, his speakers—and just set up right in the living room. Envision sitting in a living room in a rental house from AirBnB. He pulled out a kick drum and a few clap samples and laid down a few basic pieces that we could all strum guitar to. We wrote that on the spot, and then we showed it to our producer and

later we had a full band with us in the studio. In the studio we pulled up the demo of what we had worked on at the house—rough vocals, guitars, kicks and claps, a few samples—and Matt Chamberlain [a session drummer who was worked with artists like Romeo Santos, Fiona Apple, Frank Ocean and Morrissey] went to town on this thing. We're touring all the time, so we were thinking about what would work when we're playing these amphitheaters and arenas.

You guys have things like this on your previous records, too. Even when you're singing about nostalgia, your sound sometimes pushes the envelope in some subtle ways. How do you balance the two and figure how to be innovative without going too far to get played on the radio?

Over the years we've developed what feels like a Lady Antebellum sound. First and foremost it starts with our three vocals all together. When we all sing in three-part harmony it has that Lady A sound. We start with that and build our music around that. But you gotta keep pushing yourself to be fresh. It's tough. There's so many newer younger artists coming up in country music and they're absolutely killing it. Sometimes we have to remember to stay in our lane of Lady Antebellum does: It's about the songs, it's about the vocal harmonies and the vocals. And musically how can we keep that fresh.

Our producer, busbee, was a big part of that this time. He had just finished doing the Maren Morris record, and we loved the sound of that. It had a great, kind of vintage but also fresh sound. And busbee knows the entire world of samples, loops, all the software, all the programming, and he can do that just as good as anybody out there. But at the

same time, he's a guy who will say, "I need to take two hours getting this electric guitar tone right. Can you go to lunch and come back?"

Does your sound or your mindset change when you write outside Nashville?

For sure. The most important thing for us was to have each other's undivided attention. At home, we have a writing appointment, then somebody's gotta leave at three o'clock to pick up the kids, or leave at four, and you're rushing out of the door to take care of your family or do you routine. Our spouses were really supporting and said, "Y'all go off, have a retreat, go disappear into the woods and write something magical." It's the way an author who writes a book has to go off in the middle woods to a cabin where they can just think and focus on what they're creating. We wanted to be in that place, where if someone had an idea at the dinner table, we could grab a guitar and work on it all night.

Sounds fun.

Yeah, I mean, we were working like crazy, writing two or three songs a day. We got to the beach one night out of two weeks, when we were in Florida. It was a full writer's retreat. We're inspired by a lot of old rock bands, so we tried to follow in their footsteps.

Back in Nashville, does the vibe feel different in any way now that Trump is president?

The president? Oh gosh. I don't know if it feels any different. The thing that's changed in our city the most right now is the Nashville Predators's playoff run. They've really taken the city by storm. We were so honored to sing the national anthem at one of their games. That's really the talk of our town.