



USA TODAY LIFE



Foodies will love San Antonio

It still has that zing, but there's much, much more 3D

LIFELINE

AWARD TRACKER CMT MUSIC AWARDS

Kash Kubler picked up at the CMT Music Awards on Wednesday night. Kubler's video for "Blue Ain't Your Color" won video of the year and male video of the year, and he won social superstar at the fan-voted show. He duetted with Carrie Underwood on "The Fighter" in a collaborative video of the year, and they turned in one of the night's most memorable performances — a stripped-down rendition. "I don't know if I'll say," he told the audience, "I love making music."



CHRISTOPHER W. PETERSON FOR CMT

STYLE STAR

A hot look for a rising star: The cutouts in country singer Kelley Baker's Honey dress hit all the right notes Wednesday night at the CMT Music Awards.

LAUREN MCCORMACK FOR THE OREGONIAN

VIVES

Viewers of Wednesday night's NBA Finals game may have spotted a major clue for TDA's mysterious "4.44" project. After billboards began showing City and Los this week, a advertisement for the

MUSIC

Lady Antebellum's new album was like a day at the beach

'Heart Break' sessions at the shore felt like 'adult summer camp'

Bob Doersschuk
Special for USA TODAY

When the going gets tough, what do you do? You go to the beach.

That's how Lady Antebellum tackled the challenge of *Heart Break*, the superstar country trio's sixth studio album, out Friday. The usual routine in Nashville is to bunker down in studios, isolated from everything but the ticking clock and the urgency to write.

Instead, Dave Haywood, Hillary Scott and Charles Kelley decided to get away from it all and turn the project into more of a celebration than a struggle against deadlines.

"We wanted to get back to those first two records where we wrote a lot more," says Scott, 31. "So Dave had this idea: Why don't we just get out of town and go somewhere? We'll always talk about how a lot of these rock bands rent a castle or do something crazy like that."

"When you're in Nashville, somebody's got to take the kids to an appointment," says Kelley, 35. "Or you've got to go to a meeting. Something is always pulling at you. When we were able to take away all of these responsibilities, it felt like we were starting again."

"It was really refreshing to have a break to focus on the music and stay in the studio all night long," agrees Haywood, 34. "We hadn't worked together in a studio until 2 in the morning since the early days. We'd eat lunch and have big dinners at night and then hang out by a bonfire."

"We told a bunch of stories and drank way too much," Kelley interjected, smiling.

"A lot of nights, we had so much fun writing and working that we didn't want to stop," Scott adds.

Everyone also developed a new appreciation for Haywood's kitchen skills. "But Dave was the early bird, so he'd have



Just back from the beach: Lady Antebellum's Charles Kelley, Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood perform during the 2017 iHeartCountry Festival in Austin in May.

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Hillary Scott

this big breakfast and coffee laid out," says Kelley, the late riser of the group. "Then later in the day, he'd make these great craft cocktails. It was like adult summer camp."

Delivering an album beyond expectations was on everyone's mind. In the fall of 2015, the group had announced on *Good Morning America* that it would be taking a hiatus from writing and recording to pursue solo activities. It was also important, then, to all three that they rekindle the

spark that set them on course 10 years ago toward seven Grammy Awards, 18 million album sales and nine No. 1 hits.

The prolonged break also allowed the band members to spend time with their young families, because as Scott told *The Arizona Republic*, "You've got to ... live some life to really be writing about it. ... Giving ourselves time to be with our kids and our friends and our spouses, we gleaned a lot from those experiences and came back with a lot to say when we all got back in the room together."

The room was actually a house on Florida's Rosemary Beach, lined up by Kelley's wife, Cassie. They spent a week there working closely with musicians, recording techs and support staff. Most important were the songwriters who answered the group's invitation to join its adventure in creativity, documented in the lyric video for the band's first

single, *You Look Good*.

They also recruited famed dancer Bushé to helm the project. During a second coastal retreat in Southern California, they lured him by playing the demos they'd written in Florida.

"The thing about Bush that he's not afraid to say song's not done until it's done," Haywood says. "He would say, 'This could be a hit but it doesn't sound like a Lady Antebellum hit.' That was hard but sometimes that was really good from his honesty."

If measured by the variety of their music, that time was well-spent.

"I'm just proud that we're together, closer than we've been," Kelley says. "Not groups can say the same. No matter how long we've been together, how old we get and how our lives change, at the end of the day, we still have three best friends who we love together."