

# The Washington Post

## For many in country music, Lady Antebellum dials up the perfect mix



Lady Antebellum — from left, Hilary Scott, Dave Haywood and Charles Kelley — is bringing its “Wheels Up” tour to Jiffy Lube Live with Sam Hunt and Hunter Hayes. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP)

In country music, the battle for the airwaves is a battle of the sexes — and this summer, the war is turning into a quagmire.

Even though male artists already dominate radio playlists from sea to shining sea, radio consultant Keith Hill recently sparked controversy by suggesting that stations try to boost their ratings by playing even *less* music made by women. “I play great female records and we’ve got some right now; they’re just not the lettuce in our salad,” Hill told the industry publication *Country Aircheck*. “The lettuce is Luke Bryan and Blake Shelton, Keith Urban and artists like that. The tomatoes of our salad are the females.”

Nashville’s leading lady, Miranda Lambert, objected with appropriate disgust on Twitter. As for the dudes, they’ve kept mum. Because when it comes to country music’s A-list, the boat rarely gets rocked.

Standing at the very center of that boat is Lady Antebellum. As the trio has grown

from rookies to juggernauts, lead vocalists Hillary Scott and Charles Kelley have learned to share the microphone equally and thoughtfully, making their music more palatable to sexist radio programmers, but also more interesting for the rest of us. As harmonizers, these two are top notch, and as duet partners, they know how to sizzle.

Back in 2008, it seemed as if Scott and Kelley were merely hoping to revive the power ballad duets of the '80s. But five albums in, Lady A is beginning to approach the durability of their co-ed superstar forebears, Fleetwood Mac. *There's* a band that knew a thing or two about staying on the radio.

*Lady Antebellum's "Wheels Up" tour with Hunter Hayes and Sam Hunt, at Jiffy Lube Live on Saturday at 4 p.m. 703-754-6400. [www.jiffylubelive.com](http://www.jiffylubelive.com). \$30.75-\$60.50.*