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MADDIE & TAE GET AN ASSIST FROM DIERKS BENTLEY ON NEW EP 'EVERYWHERE I'M GOIN'



[Maddie & Tae](#) released the five-song EP *Everywhere I'm Goin'* on Friday (Oct. 18), and the country duo enlisted the help of longtime friend and champion [Dierks Bentley](#) for the project. Bentley serves as a featured singer on the heart-wrenching ballad "Lay Here With Me," the story of a couple nearing the edge of goodbye.

"I can't wait for that to be out," Tae Dye tells *Billboard* with a big smile ahead of the release, while seated beside bandmate Maddie Marlow at a studio in Nashville. "That has been such a hard secret for us to keep. This song is really special. We knew we wanted his vocal on it. He sounds amazing on it."

Tae further explains how much Bentley means to Maddie & Tae, as he brought the duo out on its first major tour and "loved us like we were friends forever." Adds Marlow, "After going on tour with him, I was like, 'I want to be like Dierks when I grow up,'" she says with a laugh. Bentley lived up to his esteemed reputation in the women's eyes and even set aside some time while recording his own album to put vocals on "Lay Here With Me."



Surprisingly, Maddie & Tae never intended “Lay Here With Me” to become a duet. The pair penned the song with Dave Barnes and Josh Kerr, who recently proposed to Tae. The four co-writers initially planned to write it as a love song.

“We thought, ‘Man, this could punch harder if it was the last straw of a relationship where you know it's falling apart,’” Marlow recalls. “We just tapped into those emotions and wrote it from that person’s perspective. And then we were like, ‘It'd be cool to have a male voice to tell this story.’ It’s an honor to have one of our favorite artists on our second album.”

The songs featured on *Everywhere I’m Goin’* will be included on Maddie & Tae’s forthcoming sophomore album, and the women say it’s a new chapter. The duo’s vulnerabilities and triumphs are showcased throughout the project, including songs like the reflective “Ain’t There Yet” and the feel-good title track. The duo also channel another pair of singers for the project, husband and wife duo [Johnnyswim](#).



“We were really inspired by Johnnyswim on this album and I feel like you can hear that inspiration from them on this song [‘Everywhere I’m Goin’]: The really open vocals and singing on top of each other and trading out,” Marlow says. “It’s really, really fun. That one just makes me feel good.”

The ballad comes from a special place, too. One evening Marlow was relaxing at her home with fiancé Jonah, when she realized her whole world was in her living room. That set the stage for the song, which she penned with Dye, Josh Thompson and producer Jimmy Robbins. Warm vocals, hand-clapped rhythms and soaring pedal steel flesh out the soaring ballad on love.

Marlow’s love story is also heard throughout the nostalgic “Trying On Rings,” which she penned several years ago after she and her now-fiancé went ring shopping for the first time. While she admits the song is vulnerable and that “everyone’s gonna know my business,” it’s a special one the band felt needed to be on the project to further the ongoing theme of love, loss and redemption.

“That song puts me back in that ring store. Both of us sweating like, ‘Oh my gosh, what are we doing? This is crazy! When did we grow up? Now we’re all adults and this is weird,’” she recalls. “It was a special day. I’m getting married this year, so that’s just been my little baby that’s been close to my heart. There’s a lyric that says, ‘Going on our fifth July,’ but it’s been eight July’s now.”

Highlights on Maddie & Tae’s second of three EP projects include the triumphant “Bathroom Floor,” which Maddie & Tae view as part two of its single “Die From a Broken Heart,” and the personal “Ain’t There Yet.” The latter was the duo’s first time writing with Barnes and inspired by a national anthem performance that went terribly wrong. Co-writer Ben West was in town from California when the women got together in the writing room and recalled a recent televised performance of “The Star-Spangled Banner” ahead of a football game.

“The engineers totally dropped the ball and didn’t turn on our in-ear monitors. As a harmony band, you can’t sing together,” Marlow recalls before Dye jumps in.

“There was also a slight delay and so if you don’t have the inner-ears, it’s pretty tough. It resulted in [the performance] not turning out the way that we wanted it to, and the fans were really upset about it and vocal,” Dye says. “It was so brutal. You know I was upset when I was supposed to hang out with Nick Jonas in his suite all night and I decided to go to my hotel room and cry myself to sleep.”

The following day, one of Dye’s friends called her, saying, “Get back up and have a redemptive moment.” Her response? “No, I’m not ready. I’m not there yet. Let me take my time. I’m still really upset and it’s okay that I’m upset. I’m not ready. So, ‘Ain’t There Yet’ sounds like a love song but it’s about the dang national anthem!” she admits.

While the duo aren’t ready to sing the national anthem anytime soon, they are more than excited to test out the new songs on the road as part of Carrie Underwood’s Cry Pretty Tour 360. Maddie & Tae are more confident in their live show and themselves, and it shows within the music.

“I feel like a really confident, strong version of myself right now, and I’m trying to really soak it in because it’s not always this way,” Marlow says, reflecting on her growth over the past year on the road. “It’s a new chapter. It’ll be fun to write this new chapter. I wonder what the third record is going to be like.”