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## How Maddie & Tae Overcame Label Drama to Write an Album About Love, Heartbreak & Redemption

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Carlos Ruiz

Maddie and Tae

At the start of 2017, Maddie Marlow and Taylor Dye -- better known as country duo [Maddie & Tae](#) -- deemed the months ahead “the year of uncomfortable.” With a No. 1 [Country Airplay](#) hit in their repertoire (2014’s “[Girl in a](#)

Country Song”) and a loyal fan base built, the duo were looking to push their limits as they began working on their sophomore album.

Maddie & Tae got what they wanted, but not quite in the way they’d imagined. By March, Maddie & Tae’s label, Dot Records, had shuttered, leaving them wondering about the fate of their next album -- and frankly, their career.

“We felt unwanted,” Marlow admits. “The fear of failure was very real, it was like, ‘We are failing. It’s not our choice, but we’re about to take a big hit.’”

Along with sweating the band’s future, Marlow also struggled with her own self-worth. “I remember days where I would look in the mirror and be like ‘I do not recognize this chick at all, I don’t even think I like her,’” she says. “I am a very strong independent person, but there was none of that when I looked at myself. Like, ‘Where did this chick go? How did one hiccup have that much power over me?’”

Dye, on the other hand, was practically in denial. “I just didn’t want to say it out loud,” she suggests. After seven years of serving as rocks for one another, suddenly Maddie & Tae found themselves too broken to support each other. In turn, they felt they were letting down their fans, and while they continued writing songs, they almost felt like hypocrites.

“It was really tricky in writing sessions because our reputation is strong, confident women,” Marlow says. “That is how we roll, that is what we’ve built our brand to be. So what do you do when you’re not strong, and you’re not confident?”

The answer? Channel your emotions into songs about relationships. The songs they wrote for their yet-to-be-announced next album all ended up speaking to what they’ve been through over the last couple of years, but in the form of a three-part metaphor: love, heartbreak and redemption.

The first taste of Maddie & Tae’s forthcoming LP is “Friends Don’t,” a flirty track about the confusion that comes with a friendship turning into more. (“Drive a little too slow, take the long way home/ Get a little too close/ We do, but friends don’t,” they sing on the chorus.) It’s the first track on the album, beginning the three-part story arc with romance. But while M&T are happy in their love lives -- Marlow is engaged to her high school sweetheart Jonah Font and Dye is dating fellow singer-songwriter Josh Kerr -- they actually found inspiration in Maddie’s 18-year-old sister.



“We write a lot of songs about my little sister’s love life because she is the perfect age -- such juicy drama,” Marlow says with a laugh. Though Tae is only 22 and Maddie is 23, they’ve already been singing professionally for four years, and in Marlow’s eyes, they’re full-fledged adults. “Both of us are kind of settled down, we have homes, we’re like, adulting, I guess. Family Feud at 5:30, dinner at 8:30, and bed by 9 -- that’s how we roll.”

Frankly, Maddie & Tae faced enough trials and tribulations in 2017 alone that they were practically forced to grow up. While they weren’t expecting for the year to be as stressful as it was, Maddie & Tae were certainly uncomfortable. And though Maddie & Tae were feeling perhaps the most vulnerable they ever had, it actually resulted in some of the most empowering music they’ve ever written -- as well as a sisterly bond stronger than they’d ever imagined.

“This has been the most testing year to our friendship and our sisterhood,” Dye says. “We actually have this tangible proof of everything that we’ve gone through. If we hadn’t have gone through any of that, this record wouldn’t have been made the way it was made.”

It was their bond and their fans that ultimately carried them through the challenges, especially while they were touring when they weren’t sure what was going to happen with their label. “We got to go on the road and hear that people are still listening to our songs, that it helped them through something, and if that happened, it could happen again. That’s what we held on to,” Dye asserts.

Now happily signed with Mercury Nashville under Universal Music Group Nashville, Maddie & Tae are ready for a fresh start with a new team (“our dream team,” Marlow suggests) and a completed second album that is just awaiting a release date. Adding to that excitement, they’ll hitting the road with [Carrie Underwood](#) on the [Cry Pretty 360 Tour](#) starting in May 2019.

“We’re getting to live the redemption part of the record right now,” Marlow says. “We’ve lived the the rainbows and butterflies, went through the heartbreak, but now we’re on the redemption phase and we’re like, ‘Yes!’”

When it came to making a resolution for this year, Maddie & Tae were a *little* more careful about what they wanted 2018 to be about. But with an album so meaningful in their arsenal, it was pretty easy to figure that one out. “Just go for it and embrace the speed bumps,” Marlow declares. “2018 is the year of kicking all the ass.”