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Lady Antebellum get honest, vulnerable on new record 'Ocean'

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country vocal group Lady Antebellum know how to move people to tears with their songs and their newest record feels as vulnerable and honest as a therapy session.

The trio of Charles Kelley, Hillary Scott and Dave Haywood are known for their heartfelt harmonies and emotional resonance on songs like the Grammy-winning “Need You Now,” but on their new album, “Ocean,” they looked inward at their own relationships.

“It’s been inspiring to watch that honesty come out,” said Haywood. “It’s been exciting for this season for us to be very self-aware and be vulnerable, be courageous and not be afraid and not have any fear to say those things.”

Kelley co-wrote “Be Patient with My Love” after feeling like he was letting his emotions get in the way of his relationships, saying things he didn’t mean to his wife, and not taking care of his spiritual health.

“That was kind of my first time I’ve really been really honest with myself on a song,” Kelley said. “My wife, when I played it for her, she was really proud of that. It’s nothing new to us. There’s a lot of that, say something you didn’t mean, wake up the next day, apologize, move on. Seven months later, back in the same spot.”

On “What I’m Leaving For,” the trio, who all have kids, address how it feels to leave children behind when they travel so much, something that Scott, whose parents are also well-known touring artists, knows intimately.

“I was that kid that we sing about and now I’m that mom,” Scott said, who has three girls. “My husband is a full-time dad at home and I travel.”

In the music video for the title track, Scott was moved to tears as she sang the lyrics about wanting to drown yourself in someone that’s emotionally unavailable. Her vocal delivery feels so lonely and lost as she pleads for a human connection.

“There are so many people hurting, myself included,” Scott said. “I just feel like this world we live in, we’re one of the most stressed-out cultures. It’s talked about in just about every headline you see.... That’s what this is about and that’s what I am seeing resonate with people.”

The record also includes a contribution from their longtime friend, songwriter and producer busbee, who died in September at the age of 43. He produced their last record, “Heart Break” in 2017 and co-wrote their single “You Look Good,” from that album. The band and busbee wrote an uplifting banjo-laden jam called “Alright,” which is how the band wants to remember him.

“He was such a light. He was this big tall guy with so much love to give,” Scott said. “It’s just talking about how no matter what happens, that it’s going to be alright and that this is life is beautiful. It’s so encouraging.”