

Q&A



Williams + Hirakawa

Charles Kelley, Dave Haywood, Hillary Scott

LADY ANTEBELLUM

A multiplatinum trio keeps it country while reaching for the stars

LADY GAGA'S OUTLANDISH OUTFITS may have been the talk of the Grammy Awards earlier this year, but she was upstaged that night by another Lady: Lady Antebellum. The country trio walked away with five trophies on the strength of its triple-platinum second album, *Need You Now*. "It was the first time for us to be recognized at that level," says guitarist and pianist Dave Haywood. "It was like an out-of-body experience. It made us feel like the music we're making is being heard." The band—also including singers Charles Kelley and Hillary Scott—hopes to repeat its success with the new *Own the Night*. We spoke with Haywood about the band's unique dynamic and unexpected crossover success.

How have you handled fame?

If anybody knows us, they know we're normal people and not going to do something crazy or too out-there. *Need You Now* struck a chord with our fans, and we saw how naturally that happened. On the road we found that we have a large demographic—everybody from little kids to people in their 70s. We appreciate the response we get on the road, and that shapes who we are.

How has your writing changed?

First and foremost, we have new experiences to pull from. So much came from the relationship between Hillary and her fiancé [drummer Chris Tyrrell]. We've found it was easier to tap into a female's personal life instead of a man's, so we were leaning that way a lot. But all three of us bring our own personalities to the process, and that comes through in the songs.

What's your process in the studio?

For us, recording isn't a fly-by-night thing. We put everything—our time, our emotions, our money—into making a great album. Recording is the thing I'm most passionate about. I love hanging around the studio, being there early and staying late.

Do you feel pressure to represent country in the wider pop world?

I feel we have a responsibility to be grounded and be real people, whatever may come our way. I think the core of country music is about songwriting and telling stories. A lot of people in this genre write their own material. It's important for us to remain authentic. People like Taylor Swift, Carrie Underwood

and Keith Urban have drawn in more fans, and we're proud to be a part of that. It's kind of a team. The Grammys felt like the Olympics, and our team was winning.

Is today's country too pop?

That's been an ongoing discussion since the beginning of country music. Right now it's a growing genre, and that's what makes it exciting. Obviously we're not as country as a lot of artists, but we hope what we do rings true. We're honored because we feel at our core we have these country elements in our music. With all the crazy stuff going on in the world and the economy, people long for something that's real and authentic in their lives. And we try to write songs that represent that.

What are your goals now?

Touring is a huge piece of the puzzle for us. If there's any part that needs work, it's developing the live shows. We want to develop our craft and have a completely new and different show. We want to create a great headlining tour. That's a huge part of where our mindset is now.

—Blake Boldt

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