

# LADY ANTEBELLUM

In the summer of 2006, three gifted young adults walked into a house hoping to create music together—and Lady Antebellum walked out.

The sound that Hillary Scott, Charles Kelley and Dave Haywood cooked up while hanging at the Nashville-area home of Charles' brother throughout the summer of 2006 is a unique blend that mingles classic country, 1960s R&B soulfulness and the heart-on-the-sleeve openness of 1970s singer-songwriters, all presented with a razor-sharp contemporary edge. It's a sound that had Lady Antebellum, as the threesome dubbed itself, generating deafening buzz as one of modern country's brightest hopes even before the release of their new self-titled debut album.

Already the trio has earned Country Music Association (CMA) "Best New Artist" and Academy of Country Music (ACM) "Top New Group" honors in 2008, and two Grammy nominations – Best New Artist and Country Performance by a Duo or Group. They've watched the group-penned first single from their #1 debut album *Lady Antebellum*, "Love Don't Live Here," soar into the Top 5, and the follow up "Lookin' For A Good Time" into the Top 15 on the country radio charts, while their videos have become a staple on CMT and GAC. They've performed on the legendary Grand Ole Opry, Ellen DeGeneres Show, Today Show, Late Night with Jay Leno, The Late Show with Conan O'Brien, Jimmy Kimmel Live, and Late Late Night with Craig Ferguson. Throughout 2008, they served as the opening act on Martina McBride's 2008 arena tour, and opened shows for Kenny Chesney, Carrie Underwood, Tim McGraw and Taylor Swift, and wrapped up the year on the CMT Tour with Jason Aldean. This year they are on the entire Kenny Chesney "Sun City C arnival" tour, as well as the Canadian portion of Keith Urban's 2009 outing.

Outlets like *Billboard*, *Country Weekly*, MSN Music and the *Boston Globe* included Lady Antebellum among their annual shortlists of artists to watch in 2008, and *Nashville Lifestyles* magazine flat-out called them "the next big thing." GAC has devoted a special, *Introducing ... Lady Antebellum*, to tracing their brief but eventful history.

Martina summed up the general consensus of both fans and the media when she told one audience on their tour together, “You can say you saw them when.”

But it all began on that day in 2006 when Hillary Scott’s sultry alto, Charles Kelley’s gritty tenor and multi-instrumentalist/ harmony vocalist Dave Haywood’s musical overview first intersected. Hillary, whose parents are Grammy-winning country artist Linda Davis and accomplished musician Lang Scott, had met Charles at a downtown Nashville music spot—having recognized him from his MySpace page. She introduced herself, and they struck up a conversation that ended in an agreement to try writing together.

Enter Dave Haywood, Charles’ friend since they met at Riverside Middle School in Augusta, Ga., and co-writer since they attended college together at the University of Georgia. Dave had moved to Nashville in March 2006 at his pal’s suggestion, and both were staying at the home of Charles’ brother, singer-songwriter Josh Kelley. Hillary came by the house, and over the ensuing months she, Charles and Dave fell into a fruitful songwriting partnership. “We held ourselves hostage in a writing room until the early hours of the morning every night,” Dave remembers.

At first, the three weren’t sure what exactly they were writing *for*—but it soon became obvious that Charles and Hillary produced a combustible chemistry as a vocal duo, and that Dave’s instrumental prowess and harmony vocals filled out the picture perfectly. It helped matters a great deal that the three also sparked as friends, finding an easy balance of personalities. “I’m the analytical perfectionist, Hillary brings the silliness and the emotion, and Dave is the calming glue,” Charles explains. “Everyone balances everybody else out.”

Each also brought diverse influences into the collaboration, ranging from The Allman Brothers Band to Vince Gill, from The Eagles to Keith Urban, and from Gladys Knight to Travis Tritt. All those elements added up to something distinctly modern, yet grounded in old-fashioned gut-level passion. “It’s like a Neapolitan blend of all these flavors,” Dave says. “It’s a really great marriage, musically and lyrically.” Their old-school influences led them to choose an old-time moniker, inspired by a just-for-fun photo shoot in front of an Antebellum-style home: Lady Antebellum. (“There’s not anything too terribly meaningful behind it,” Charles admits.)

The three began posting demos on MySpace to see what kind of reaction they'd receive, and visitor feedback was immediately, overwhelmingly positive. Audience reaction was just as instantaneous when Lady Antebellum began playing small gigs around Music City. "It took on a life of its own," marvels Dave, who booked their first shows himself. "There was no plan, we just kept churning out as many songs as we could." Early fans soon took it upon themselves to bestow upon the trio the shorthand nickname "Lady A."

By April 2007, the group had signed a recording contract with Capitol Nashville and begun work on their debut with the aid of megaproducer Paul Worley and award-winning songwriter Victoria Shaw. The resulting album is a vivid document of the group's verve, versatility and vibrancy. *Lady Antebellum*'s 11 songs—10 of which were co-written by the band—effortlessly capture the trio's musical interplay, emotional directness and all-for-one spirit. The chugging hit "Love Don't Live Here" (inspired by a breakup Charles had just endured) announces their intent from its opening moments, as the chiming guitars give way to Charles' gutsy voice, quickly seconded by Hillary's backing vocal. Throughout the album, the two lead singers shift easily between taking the spotlight and sharing it, whether they're trading off lines in the great tradition of country duet singers or supporting one another with sparkling harmonies.

The range of emotion on *Lady Antebellum* encompasses both the joyfully romantic "Love's Lookin' Good On You" and the desolation of the swelling ballad "All We'd Ever Need" (the very first song the trio composed together). Between those extremes is the driving "Long Gone," a display of attitudinal assurance from Hillary; "Lookin' for a Good Time," an irresistible come-on from Charles; "Slow Down Sister," a churning rocker with touches of Southern rock and Stax groove; and the pulsing "I Run to You," in which the voices circle one another tantalizingly before melding seamlessly in the chorus. Fans drawn in by "Love Don't Live Here" are about to discover just how much more there is to Lady Antebellum—and given the trio's breathtaking rise to newly minted star status, it's a sure bet that there are plenty of listeners out there waiting to do just that. "It still overwhelms me," Hillary admits. "I'm a true believer that what's meant to be will fall into place. When the ride starts, you've just got to jump on."

With a one-of-a-kind vocal chemistry that evokes the tradition of classic country, an up-to-the-second modern sound, and a songwriting partnership that's both timely and timeless, Lady Antebellum offers a combination that's both shockingly fresh and as familiar as an old friend.