

Music Update

Need you now...

That is the title of Lady Antebellum's second album, lifted from its leadoff track, which explores the desperate longings that make separated lovers yearn to reconnect in the wee small hours of the morning. But that "need you now" mantra isn't just a refrain that exes leave on each other's answering machines in the middle of the night. That message could just as easily serve as an SOS sent out to the group from fans and the music industry. The band's first album, from 2007, was the very rare freshman effort to debut at No. 1 and/or go Platinum these days, and the emotional connection that was forged with audiences over the short course of several hit singles and high-profile tours clearly left 'em wanting—no, needing—more.

Thankfully, unlike in the song, we won't even have to do any drunk-dialing to get what we've craved. Less than two years after the trio's debut first hit stores with a splash, *NEED YOU NOW* is at hand to satisfy the hunger. There's been no lull in the roll Lady Antebellum is on. They've had back-to-back chart-topping singles, proceeding directly from the previous effort's "I Run to You" hitting the top spot in July to their "Need You Now" single enjoying a multi-week run at No. 1 just prior to the new album's release. Even without any pop radio play, "Need You Now" cracked the top 10 of Billboard's all-genre Hot 100, and the tune went to No. 1 on the iTunes all-genre singles chart.

NEED YOU NOW comes right on the heels of a couple of prominent Grammy nominations and two key wins at November's CMA Awards - Single of the Year ("I Run to You") and Vocal Group of the Year.

The CMAs recognition did bring about a fairly urgent sense of ante-upping. "It puts expectations on us," says Charles Kelley, who shares lead vocal duties with Hillary Scott. "We already felt like there was a lot to prove after winning Best New Artist the year before—like people are invested in us and saying 'All right, go get 'em.' Which is why we're excited to get this album out."

"I'll be honest," says Hillary. "Somebody asked me if I was on such a high about the awards, and I said 'Absolutely.' But I was thinking to myself, 'I'm also a little terrified.' Because you hit a point like that and you really can't go backwards..."

"Well, we can go backwards," chimes in Charles, the pragmatist, laughing nervously.

"If anything, though, it makes us want to work harder and record even better songs and continue to grow as performers and prove that we're deserving of it," says Hillary.

You can hear that burning flame throughout *NEED YOU NOW*, which continues their delicate—or delicately rowdy—balance of emotional, gut-level balladry and high-octane, arena-ready rockers. Members of the trio co-wrote eight of the 11 tracks and were able to rely on a much tighter intra-band bond than they had when they were crafting the first album, which was recorded not that long after old pals Charles and Dave got together with new acquaintance Hillary to form the group back in 2006.

"Because of the success of the first record, we could get with some really great songwriters that'll take an appointment with us now," says Dave, the group's guitarist and background vocalist. "But more importantly, the three of us are close friends. We've spent almost every day together for the past three years. So by the time we were writing songs for this record, we'd all learned how to interact with each other better. We can write songs individually, but we have something special when we do it together."

"Songwriting," Charles asserts, "is almost kind of like our little group therapy."

Any such therapeutic discussions don't involve too many regrets about professional roads not taken. Least of all would they have any reason to regret having abandoned solo careers to come together as a group, at a time when the conventional wisdom was that individuals usually work better than bands in marketing country music.

"When we met Hillary," says Charles, "she had all these contacts in town and had some development deals—just basically really tied into the system." She had a bit of a head start on understanding the business, too, being the daughter of the well-known singer Linda Davis. "We were like, 'All right, she's got one of the best voices. We've got to write for her project.' So we got together with her and wrote 'All We'd Ever Need' and 'Love Don't Live Here Anymore,' which ended up on the first record. We thought, 'Wow, this is really great,' but we didn't want her to think we were little weasels trying to get in there and ride her coattails."

Hillary: "And I was sitting there thinking, 'This takes so much of the pressure off!' You could not pay me enough money to go back and NOT be in a band. Being a solo artist wasn't for me. I wasn't cut out for it. I didn't handle the pressure at all." Even now, she eagerly confesses, "I'm the baby of the group. But I've grown up!"

For the band itself, there was an element of growing up in public, a little. The debut album debuted at No. 1 on the country albums chart, an example of a rare phenomenon that is referred to in the arcane parlance



Lady Antebellum

of the music industry as... love at first sight. But their first real tour was an arena tour, opening for Martina McBride, and they acknowledge that, as a still fairly newly founded combo, there were rough patches in their performances. "It felt a little early, even though the crowds were really gracious and great to us," remembers Charles.

They then went on to fairs and festivals to hone their craft in a safer environment.

With their performance chops finally in order, the group wrapped up a tour supporting Kenny Chesney, neared the end of their sophomore effort, and received the call to support Keith Urban on his tour.

With male and female front people, Hillary says, "I think we're able to say more and reach more people." To paraphrase Casablanca, this feels like the second step in a beautiful friendship.

Promo Only Top 20 for June, 2009

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|---------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Tik Tok | Ke\$ha |
| 2. Bad Romance | Lady Gaga |
| 3. Sexy Chick | David Guetta f./ Akon |
| 4. Replay | Iyaz |
| 5. According To You | Orianthi |
| 6. Do You Remember | Jay Sean f./ Sean Paul |
| 7. Two Is Better Than One | Boys Like Girls |
| 8. Empire State Of Mind | Jay-Z & Alicia Keys |
| 9. Whatcha Say | Jason Derulo |
| 10. Hard | Rihanna f./ Young Jeezy |
| 11. Bedrock | Young Money f./ Lloyd |
| 12. Fireflies | Owl City |
| 13. Down | Jay Sean f./ Lil' Wayne |
| 14. Live Like We're Dying | Kris Allen |
| 15. Breakeven | The Script |
| 16. Whataya Want From Me | Adam Lambert |
| 17. 3 | Britney Spears |
| 18. Already Gone | Kelly Clarkson |
| 19. Need You Now | Lady Antebellum |
| 20. All The Right Moves | OneRepublic |

Chart compiled from national airplay charts and Promo Only feedback

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ROLLER SKATING TRIVIA!?!?

Question: What year did roller derby begin?

Answer: 1935