

TSF Tour LIVE: Lady A

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Intro: Hi, friends! Welcome to another episode of That Sounds Fun. I'm your host Annie F. Downs. I'm really happy to be here with you today. We have got a great show in store. Today on the show. We start our live podcast conversations from our That Sounds Fun tour in June. Throughout July, you're gonna get to hear all 12 live conversations if you weren't able to make it in person. We did save some of the interview just for the live audience, but most of it you're going to hear right here and you're going to get to hear some live feedback from the audience.

First up are my friends Hillary Scott, Dave Haywood, and Charles Kelley from Lady A. You may know them from some of their most popular songs over the years: "Need You Now," "What If I Never Get Over You," "American Honey." Y'all they are one of my very favorite bands.

Over the course of their decade-plus career, Lady A has had more than 18 million albums purchased, 34 million tracks sold, and 5 billion digital streams, and they recently earned their 11th career number one with the multi-week and gold chart-topper "Champagne Night." Their new album "What a Song Can Do [Chapter One]" just came out last week, and y'all, it is so good. The new theme song you hear in the background was made by Dave Haywood from Lady A, along with our friend Tauren Wells.

Listen, Dave, Hillary, Charles, all three of these friends are so special to me, and I was so grateful to have them as our Nashville guests on the tour. And there was no better conversation to start sharing with y'all than this one. I think you're really gonna enjoy it. Here is my conversation with Lady A.

Annie: We're about to record a podcast with Charles, Dave, and Hillary from Lady A. Yes!

Dave Haywood: Hi, friends. Oh, my God. Hi.

Annie: So fun, right? It's so fun. Oh, you go. Sorry, I'm a terrible host already. Right? I mean, you like the song because you made the song.

Dave Haywood: I do. I do.

Charles Kelley: You do.

Annie: You made the song, Dave?

Dave Haywood: I've been dancing to that song in my basement for a few months now. So it's nice to hear it here.

Annie: Will you back us up on that actual song and say what was the whole process? How did you even find that for us? How did you do that?

Dave Haywood: Well, thank you for asking, and thanks for having us tonight, y'all. I've been a fan of yours for a long time.

Annie: Thank you.

Dave Haywood: You know, my wife works with you. We both do what my wife says. We work with her.

Annie: Yes, we both do what your wife says. That's 100% true.

Dave Haywood: But yeah, she was like, "We're looking for some music," and I was like, "I love..." I mean, the way we write a lot of our music actually is kind of little chord progressions and beats and things we write too. I was just kind of envisioning what you were going for and sort of something exciting and just kind of came up with that in my basement studio for fun. And then getting Tauren Wells on it was so much fun.

Annie: Oh, my gosh, isn't he the best? Tell me why you wore the exact same outfit as me.

Dave Haywood: I feel like that's the Nashville classic get up.

Annie: Yeah, you're right though. You're right though. You're right though. You're right. It's a Nashville thing. He walked in and I was like, "Oh, really? We're doing this? We're doing this?" You wore it better. I'm very interested in that. Hi, Hill.

Hillary Scott: Hi. This is so fun.

Hillary Scott: I am just soaking it up. I'm a really proud friend right now.

Annie: We've already cried twice tonight, so I'm gonna need her to settle it down right now because I'm not here for that. So, Charles, we'll move right on because you and I haven't cried yet.

Charles Kelley: No, we haven't cried.

Annie: It's a big night already.

Charles Kelley: Oh, my goodness!

Annie: This is an audio podcast. Will you show everybody your new tattoo?

Charles Kelley: Oh, yes.

Annie: It's gonna help a lot for the audio.

Charles Kelley: It's a rose. Yeah.

Annie: It's beautiful.

Charles Kelley: It's so funny. Kelli, your manager, and Dave's wife asked me, she was like, "So what is this? I see two new tattoos." And I don't know what it is. Maybe I'm just... the pandemic, I went down the road in boredom and I just felt like-

Annie: "Somebody hurt me!"

Charles Kelley: ...doing something artistic. Yeah, hurt me!

Annie: Hurt me! Hurt me!

Charles Kelley: Make me feel! Make me feel something more than I've already felt this year. I felt more this year than I ever have. So I don't want to feel this much ever again. This is a lot of feelings.

Annie: Poor Charles, he didn't know I'm about to just dig right in on that, does he? He doesn't know. Is that really true you felt more this year than you felt ever?

Charles Kelley: Just, I mean, really getting in touch with who I am, what I want to be about moving forward as a husband, as a father. Because I feel like the biggest thing I had to recognize

is I've always been looking for the next thing. It's always been the next goal. And I really, truly don't know if I've ever really settled into a moment in my life. It's just a constant chase and chase for exciting, new fun things. And it was like forced stillness, forced self-awareness, all that kind of stuff.

Annie: Do you have words for that?

Hillary Scott: Well, I know we're not supposed to try to project what we think someone's Enneagram number is-

Annie: Oh, boy! Oh, boy!

Hillary Scott: But I just kind of want to pull the audience.

Dave Haywood: You tell.

Charles Kelley: You tell.

Hillary Scott: Who thinks Charles is a seven?

Annie: Maybe.

Charles Kelley: Very much so.

Annie: Do you think so?

Charles Kelley: Oh, yeah, looking at it. I thought I was like a three when I first looked at it. I can't remember. What is it? I think the three is a little bit more put together.

Annie: He's like, "Annie, wouldn't it be true that you and I are the least put together?"

Charles Kelley: Yeah. But definitely, I'm a thrill-seeker. Not like I would never want to go jump out of a plane or any of that kind of stuff. Not those kind of thrills, but some kind of adrenaline rush. Something like some concert. Something. You know, I don't know. Something exciting. I always need that.

Annie: Yeah, tattoos.

Charles Kelley: Tattoos.

Annie: He's like, "Yeah, totally quick, here's the two new things in my arm."

Charles Kelley: Yeah, I'm already bored with these. Can we get rid of these now? Can I go...? Yeah.

Annie: Dave, when you hear Charles talk about that, y'all been friends since what?

Charles Kelley: This is enough for me. Let's move on and-

Annie: I said Dave. Give me a second, brother. How old were y'all when y'all became friends?

Dave Haywood: Oh, gosh, we've been friends... I mean, 1993 I think?

Charles Kelley: Yeah.

Dave Haywood: I grew up in Chapel Hill for a couple of years, but then moved back to Augusta where I was born, but born and raised basically in Augusta, Georgia. Went to the same Middle School. He had a middle school band. I had a middle school band.

Charles Kelley: Do tell the names.

Dave Haywood: I know. I know. Well, our band was called Overcast.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Dave Haywood: Like the weather.

Annie: Yeah, I got it. Thank you.

Dave Haywood: Okay, thank you.

Annie: Yeah, I thought.

Dave Haywood: Just making sure.

Annie: I've worked it out and I got there myself.

Charles Kelley: We were a band called Spork. Like little... from KFC you get the spoon and the forks.

Annie: You keep asking to move on and then you keep doing this.

Charles Kelley: I know. And then, yes, we wore the Spork necklaces to school.

Annie: You are lying!

Charles Kelley: We did. We did.

Annie: You wore Spork necklaces to middle school?

Charles Kelley: It lasted one day and we got made fun of and we never wore them again.

Annie: So was it on a chain?

Charles Kelley: I can't remember exactly. It was on some kind of rope. Cut your little hole and you got the little spork hanging down. And I guess if you want a snack, you could grab your chain and just...

Annie: You could eat lunch with your jewelry...

Charles Kelley: Yeah

Annie: ...is what you're saying? How many of y'all were in that band?

Charles Kelley: Oh, it's my brother Josh Kelley and a couple gentlemen. That's Patrick Blanchard. Actually, Patrick Blanchard was in my second band called Inside Blue, another cool one. We liked to play blues, and we were inside.

Annie: You got one clap?

Charles Kelley: But yeah.

Annie: Someone was like, "Good on you; better than Spork."

Charles Kelley: It was better than Spork, yeah.

Annie: So my question is, that's Charles's response after 2020 and you've known him for forever, what is your response after 2020? Did you have that kind of feeling of like, "I've got to learn to be in the thing that I'm in?"

Dave Haywood: You know, it's interesting. For me, there was something that when the pandemic happened, and it was terrible, but there's something as an introvert that kind of made me go, "Oh, there's not much expectation coming up. I can kind of be at home." I really felt sad. I think the last couple years I've been so excited about being able to do music, but there's a sadness with missing your kids and leaving and touring and traveling. So to have an opportunity to be able to take my kids to school, pick them up, be home. I knew we'd get out of this thing. I had hope. I didn't know how. It went longer than we all predicted.

Annie: Right.

Dave Haywood: Way longer than we all predicted. But when it started, I was like, "This is wild and crazy, but there's something about it that I can kind of be okay with." Even the song we were joking about at the beginning, which I love doing that stuff. I mean, I can kind of just sort of be in my studio and working on music, production, songwriting. It's kind of my happy place.

At the end of the day, though, being in front of people and doing this is really what kind of gives life an excitement. But there's parts of it that I was like, "I'm okay for a little bit. I can chill. I can do this." You hit a point, though, where you just run out of iPad time for your kids.

Annie: I need to turn off my own screen time. I'm out of trouble. Hill, what do you know about God in June of 2021 that you didn't know a year ago?

Hillary Scott: Oh! That He is kind even in the midst of uncertainty. Hearing Dave answer that question, it's just I had to ask myself a lot. As much to echo you, I loved being at home with my kids, with my daughters, and my husband. I had always kind of been afraid to pray for a summer at home after Eisele was born just because I knew that's when we tour, that's when things get really busy, that would be impossible. But I'd always kind of yearned to know what that felt like. And so-

Annie: Why were you afraid to pray that?

Hillary Scott: It didn't feel possible, I think, just because of our schedule and the way that life kind of works within our touring aspect of our career. And I feel like God answered that prayer for me. That I was able to be home, and then, to your point, longer than we all anticipated. But it was an answered prayer. And so I felt God's kindness in that. It also encouraged me to not be afraid to ask for anything in His name.

Annie: Really?

Hillary Scott: So it's helped me I think become a little bit more of an emboldened prayer.

Annie: Wild.

Hillary Scott: Yeah.

Annie: That is wild. So it's by getting the thing you were never praying for-

Hillary Scott: Afraid to pray for.

Annie: ...now you go, "Well, then I can pray for anything."

Hillary Scott: Yeah.

Annie: Because why? What's the rest of that sentence?

Hillary Scott: Because I think over this past year, I've been more cognizant of His faithfulness, just bringing us through, bringing me through so much. I think it was just a renewed sense of that.

Annie: This is an all skate. Y'all can decide who tells me this. Us, this, sorry. It's not just us. It's all of us. There were some things y'all got to do over the last year. Like Songland was last year, right? In 2020? Was it in 2020?

Dave Haywood: Yeah, top of 2020.

Hillary Scott: Yeah, it was. That was the last thing we did.

Dave Haywood: Yeah, we were in LA-

Charles Kelley: Right before in January-

Dave Haywood: 2020 we were in LA to do Songland.

Charles Kelley: Speaking of that, Dave... I'm sure there's a lot of people that have this little theory. Dave has a theory that it was that taping that weekend that you have a theory that you-

Dave Haywood: I got really sick in Los Angeles.

Charles Kelley: Patient A right here.

Hillary Scott: Then I got sick

Annie: You brought it to Nashville?

Charles Kelley: He might have. He might have. Patient A.

Hillary Scott: That's a rumor to start.

Dave Haywood: Breaking News.

Annie: Breaking News. Dave Haywood from Lady A is the reason Nashville got COVID. That's terrible to hear. That's not what you want to be remembered for, bud.

Charles Kelley: It was like The Scarlet Letter. I remember there was a guy in the music business, we were filming for a fundraiser and it was like, you know, name, this guy's name and it went all around town and like, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe he gave it..." And it was like, "He didn't mean to give it to anybody. He didn't mean to get it."

Annie: Right. Right. He wasn't passing it out.

Charles Kelley: Yeah, he wasn't passing it out. He didn't know.

Annie: Did y'all songwriting change last year?

Charles Kelley: Oooh, yes and no.

Hillary Scott: The way we wrote, for sure. I mean, so many of our writing appointments—and Charles, you did the heavy lifting here—but they were on Zoom a lot of the time.

Charles Kelley: I mean, finally I kind of settled into just chilling out but I was like, "All right, I'm at home. I'm bored. What do I do?" And again, listen, y'all, I love the time with my little 5-year-old boy and my wife, but-

Annie: Ward's kind of angelic, your son.

Charles Kelley: Well, he is really special.

Annie: He's just so special.

Charles Kelley: But I have to have one thing every day that is my purpose. And it can literally be going to play golf. It could be "I gotta get to work out." I got to have one thing. It could be "I got to go to the mall and get..." But I have to have something to base my day around. So I would kind of based around these writes. But I wrote a bunch.

All that to say there was a lot of those kind of introspective songs. And after a while, we started thinking like, when we get through with this, you know what I don't want to hear anymore is "these are unprecedented times. We're all in it together. We can get through this." And it was like, no. And that's why when she wrote "Like A Lady," we said, "That's what we need." I want something that makes me roll my windows down.

"Champagne Night" was another example. It was like, "Gosh, that was right during that whole time and when it was all happening." And then we pivoted to that single because we were like, "Man, everything is so heavy. I just want something that makes me feel good."

Annie: Does that feel true that sometimes we just need a thing?

Hillary Scott: Oh, yeah. I know when I wrote "Like A Lady," it was like-

Annie: Who else did you write that with? Anybody else we know?

Hillary Scott: Yes. Dave Barnes.

Annie: Dave Barnes. Friend of the pod as well. Yes.

Hillary Scott: And then three other incredible writers. That was such a 2020 writing session.

Annie: Were y'all all on Zoom five of you?

Hillary Scott: No. Dave and I and Brandon Paddock were socially distanced in a studio. And then Michelle Buzz was in Los Angeles, and then Martin Johnson was in Wyoming in his RV or something. I mean, it was-

Charles Kelley: Guys, it's wild.

Annie: Wild. It feels like you're lying.

Hillary Scott: I know.

Annie: I know you're not, but you like, "He was in his RV." Yeah, I don't know.

Hillary Scott: It was so weird.

Dave Haywood: Matt Cornett was there. He started playing bongos.

Hillary Scott: Kevin Bacon.

Annie: Yeah, got it.

Charles Kelley: That was cool. I like that.

Hillary Scott: But I just dreamed of the live show. I mean, when all of that energy... it's a fun female empowerment message, but more than anything, I was sitting there just hoping and yearning that we could play this live at some point in the near future.

Charles Kelley: Sorry to cut you short. To juxtapose that, though, I think y'all should share... This is one of another song that I wasn't a part of writing. And I'm so glad because I am very likely to get in there kind of guy when I'm in the writing room. And I think if this title had been pitched to write, I would have said, "No way! That's not commercial. Let's not do this."

But Dave and Hillary wrote a song called "Worship What I Hate." So the complete opposite concepts talking about going and diving super deep, and of how this year kind of affected and what we recognized about ourselves. But you also talk about that song. To me, that's one of the pillars.

Hillary Scott: That song, in particular, we wrote with Natalie Hemby, who has written so many incredible songs. Rainbow, Kacey Musgraves, I mean, she's just got such an incredible way of putting words to melody. And we were talking just about how we were coping with these unprecedented times.

Charles Kelley: Well said. Keep saying it, they'd love to hear it.

Annie: We'd love to hear it. We'd love to hear it.

Charles Kelley: It's a buzzword.

Hillary Scott: And especially as a wife and mother and just what am I consuming every day? Because over this last year plus, there's just been so much uncertainty and so much unrest and so much hard going on, and within our own homes and outside of it, politically, you know, all of it. And how am I coping? What am I ingesting? And am I growing into the person that I want to be? Or am I making things my idol that I'd never have intended to make my idol?

And that was really what the whole song was about was just like whether it be perfectionism, comparing myself to other people, needing to drink more wine just to go to sleep, to get through a day, hiding in my closet for my children for a couple minutes because I was just about to pull my hair out, things like that that I think we all had our own version of. And having that aha moment of when I put in the good things, when I fill up myself with what I know is true, what pours out is so much healthier, and those idols get put in their place.

Dave Haywood: Also there's this line in the song about "I'm not guilty of leaving, I'm guilty of sticking around being right here but being checked out and not being present." And boy, that line wrecks me every time it comes around. And if you're a parent, you'll know this feeling, where you're stuck in your phone, you're just scrolling, you're going, you're going and you can just feel your kids around you, "Daddy, daddy," and you're just...

I mean, it wrecks me when I hear it because I've been there. You're just glossing over what's right in front of you and you're overlooking the beauty that is sitting right there in front of you. And we try to fit all of that into that song. I mean, for me, like you mentioned the John Eldredge book earlier in the evening, I mean, I read that and just ditched all social media. I just needed a cleanse.

Annie: Really?

Dave Haywood: I just needed a moment away because I felt myself doing that thing. My wife's here, my kids are here, I'm able to do music with my two best friends here. Let's focus on that. Let's be present here. I've found that, for me, kind of when the pandemic sort of began, I realized how much I just was addicted to the endless, like, what am I looking for here? So I think that was a journey for me too.

Annie: What am I looking for here? That's the question, Dave. What am I looking for here?

Dave Haywood: Yeah.

Annie: I mean, Sarah Catherine said a similar thing when she was up here, saying, "It is Instagram that keeps me from knowing what's true."

Charles Kelley: Oh, gosh. And you focus on the few hateful sides of what it is, the hate is so much louder than all the positivity out there. But man, I'm so worried of the world that the next generation, our kids, my kid is going to be put to. I mean, I'm sure every generation says that, but there's so much pressure and so much anxiety that comes from that? And I'm with Dave. I had to turn off and literally delete that app because I find myself just doing the same routine. I go, text message, email, Instagram, Golf Channel, this, this. And then I pick it up two minutes later-

Annie: Same cycle.

Charles Kelley: Same cycle.

Annie: That's right. That was me too.

Charles Kelley: I'm like, "What is wrong with me?" I'm like, Pavlov's dog. Pavlov's dog.

Hillary Scott: I go to like, check a text message and before I know it, I don't even realize I'm on Instagram scrolling. And I'm like, "Why am I here? What was I supposed to be doing?" I mean, it's just so powerful.

Charles Kelley: Because Caitlyn had a new nose and we got to see. We wanna see what it looks like. You can't tell.

Hillary Scott: On a serious note, one thing that my husband and I we've talked a lot about with the phone thing, and... because he is very good at lovingly saying, like, "Hill, put your phone down." He said, "Our generation and as parents, we've got a lot more flexibility, a lot of us with our schedules to be at all of our kids' games because we can do things from our email, or there's more freelancers, or you work from home." But he said, he goes, "I think our kids one day are going to say it's not that you weren't there. You were there, you just weren't paying attention." And I was like, "Whoo..."

Annie: Wow.

Hillary Scott: "...you are so right." And so I try to always keep that at the forefront of my mind.

Annie: Okay. Okay. I wonder, Charles, when you say that about what's gonna happen with Ward in 10 years, I just wonder if your kids and the next generation of kids are going to not do any of this.

Charles Kelley: That's my hope. You see some of that happening where it's like, "This isn't cool." I hope it just becomes where it's like not cool. And to be honest, I don't think I would do it if it wasn't for the feeling and the need, like all the younger artists are doing it, I'm like, "Well, how are people going to know we have a show next week or something?" So I do it. And then I find myself getting sucked into the vortex of what the Kardashians are doing. And they are very intriguing.

Annie: It is a vortex to be fair.

Charles Kelley: They are very intriguing.

Annie: Very intriguing.

Charles Kelley: They are. I don't know. I just think I love it when a family comes from nothing and it gets all the way to the top. Like, this is great.

Annie: It's a vortex. It's a vortex. He just made us all go into it.

Charles Kelley: Sorry, guys.

Annie: And you did not ask our permission.

Charles Kelley: I know.

Annie: We did not say you could do that to us.

Charles Kelley: I'm all good though. What was the question?

Annie: I think that is very interesting to hear you say that, Charles, because the rest of us realize y'all are Lady A. No one's gonna forget you have concerts. You feel like you're Spork and we're remembering you're Lady A.

Charles Kelley: Oooh!

Dave Haywood: That was deep.

Charles Kelley: I should not have even said Spork, man. It started with Inside Blue.

Annie: If you think I'm not getting you a necklace with a Spork on it, you have not known me the decade that you know me, my man. That thing is coming. It is coming.

Charles Kelley: If you're gonna do that, please bring a bucket of chicken because KFC is like one of my favorites. I love it. And they have the best chicken. They do. Popeyes is a close second.

Annie: What is happening? Wait. Wait.

Charles Kelley: I love that chicken from Popeyes. We're trying to get you a sponsor.

Annie: No. No.

Charles Kelley: Love that chicken from Popeyes. That's what Ward does, my little boy.

Annie: Cassie, where are you? Where is your wife? What is happening?

Charles Kelley: Speaking how much TV we watch, he knows every... he'll go there, he'll go, "Liberty, liberty, liberty." We watch way too much television in the Kelley household.

Annie: We're not leaving this. Best fried chicken where? I care.

Hillary Scott: I'd have to say probably Hattie B's here.

Annie: Both men are like, "Okay, Hillary. Way to be local." You're right. How spicy do you go, though, Hill?

Hillary Scott: Not very. I'm a mouth girl.

Dave Haywood: It's too hard to go super spicy.

Charles Kelley: Mouth is still spicy, though.

Annie: Yeah. Because that extra hot stuff, you're like, "I'm not tasting anything except anger."

Hillary Scott: No.

Annie: That is just like in my body.

Hillary Scott: And I know I'm gonna be miserable later.

Annie: Oh!

Hillary Scott: Yeah.

Annie: Don't talk about it. But it gets bad.

Hillary Scott: It does.

Annie: Yeah, yeah. We didn't get permission to talk about that either or the vortex. Dave, best fried chicken?

Dave Haywood: I mean, KFC kind of takes the cake for me.

Charles Kelley: It is.

Dave Haywood: Charl, we grew up... I mean, come on. I was a Spork fan, Annie.

Charles Kelley: He was in the fan club.

Dave Haywood: I was in the front row.

Sponsor: Hey friends, just taking a short break from this Live podcast to our conversation with Lady A to give a shout out to our incredible partners Third Love. Y'all know I'm about moments of self-care and Sabbath. It's important to me to take time to do little things in life to care for myself. A great way to do just that is with some Third Love comfort.

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Annie: This is a question I thought of this afternoon when I was thinking about y'all. Charles, before y'all got here, our friend Adam who tour manages for y'all and I borrowed for this tour, thankfully, he's known y'all as long as well. And he said, "Charles voice is never off." He said, "He is always right on." He was like, "He does not have an off day." Hillary agrees with me?

Charles Kelley: Wow.

Annie: She's nodding. When did you know that's what you wanted to give your life to, to using your voice to singing? I mean, Spork days for sure.

Charles Kelley: Yeah, Yeah.

Annie: But did you really know like, "This is actually how I want to run my life."

Charles Kelley: Not till I moved to Nashville. It didn't take till the day I stepped foot in this town that I was like, "Okay, I'm never going back." But Dave and I have similar stories. We kind of grew up playing music. I would always see him... He played in the youth group. And-

Annie: Wait, I'm sorry. Was Overcast a Christian band?

Charles Kelley: No.

Dave Haywood: Overcast was kind of... we walked the line. We walked the line. We kind of had our toes-

Charles Kelley: Sometimes they would play Dave Matthews.

Annie: Chris Tomlin. You go in. I get it. I get it.

Dave Haywood: But I would play at church in the praise and worship band and at youth group and camp, retreats, and all kinds of stuff growing up.

Charles Kelley: But I could tell he was super talented. It really is kind of a wild story because I will say we were close but we were definitely in some different circles. I will admit I was definitely in more of the bad or the bad crowd.

Annie: The Sporky group.

Charles Kelley: We would go to the youth group to see the girls and I was like, "Man, Dave is really talented." Anyways, we played in bands and stuff, but Dave and I both ended up going to college at University of Georgia.

Annie: Tan taran taran tarara...!

Charles Kelley: I studied finance; he was... what do you call that? MT? MST? MSIT?

Hillary Scott: Information systems.

Dave Haywood: Management Information Systems Technology.

Charles Kelley: You shouldn't be.

Annie: Why are you embarrassed by this? You got a college degree.

Charles Kelley: He created our first website in Myspace page when we started.

Annie: Listen, why didn't we all know how to code in 2005? Everyone knew how to code. All of us did.

Dave Haywood: Myspace has a very significant nother story.

Hillary Scott: It does.

Charles Kelley: We'll get there.

Annie: Okay.

Charles Kelley: I like this podcast thing. This whole podcast is, you just talk. You just talk. This is easy. Where is my manager? Can I get on this game? What would be my focus? It would just be like be like maybe Matthew McConaughey just ran into all these worlds.

Annie: We're experiencing it right now.

Charles Kelley: The whole audience would be sitting here going like, "Was he just talking about...? Wait, no, he's in space. Now he's... okay. Oh." It would be interesting.

Annie: I'm so glad I got to be at this show.

Charles Kelley: This is fun.

Dave Haywood: Well said.

Charles Kelley: Yes, thank you. But anyways, we both got to Georgia. My brother Josh Kelley is an artist and he ends up moving to LA and getting a record deal with Hollywood Records out there. And so he has a couple of years where he's doing music, and he comes to Nashville to start writing songs. He falls in love with Nashville. And this is probably...

Annie: And Katherine Heigl. Don't leave that out. He's married to Katherine. Your sister-in-law is Katherine Heigl.

Charles Kelley: Well, the interesting wrench is he moves to Nashville. Around this time, he decides he wants to move to Nashville and he meets Katherine Heigl on his video shoot. Well, of course, they fall in love. Well, guess where Katherine Heigl lives? Los Angeles. But he just bought this house in Nashville but he spent all his time in LA. And I'm like, "Hey, man, I'd love to move to Nashville and see if I can give this a go." So I have this really killer house for free.

Annie: Oh, wow.

Charles Kelley: In Nashville.

Annie: Did you have a job between college and moving here?

Charles Kelley: I did. I worked for a year with my oldest brother. We were basically flipping homes and stuff. I would wake up at like 6:30 in the morning. I was like, "This is too early."

Annie: Yeah, 6:30 in the morning, not interesting.

Charles Kelley: And now of course I do that every morning with Ward. My wife's like not every morning. But anyway, I moved to Nashville, and I'm here and I don't know anybody and my brother's gone the whole time. And I'm like, "I don't know what to do." And I'm like, "I will call my buddy Dave." I mean, it still to me sounds so random why I did this. And I called him up and he's working in Atlanta.

And I would come up to Atlanta on the weekends, sleep on his couch and we started writing some of these songs. And I was like, "Dave, I don't know what this is, but there's something here. There's something really good here." And he decides to quit his job, which he had a great job with benefits, all the stuff...

Annie: It was years.

Charles Kelley: 401[k]s. You know what I'm talking about? Big stuff.

Annie: Grown-up stuff.

Charles Kelley: So anyways, we come to Nashville—Gosh, I'm talking a lot—and we started to write these songs. And Josh has me as his number one friend on Myspace. So I'm out of a bar in Nashville-

Annie: Congratulations!

Charles Kelley: Now, I'm done.

Hillary Scott: Okay. I was a fan of Josh and he did.

Annie: His music?

Hillary Scott: His music, mm-hmm. He was a very kind brother and had Charles in one of his top eight friends.

Annie: Charles just told us you were his number one friend.

Dave Haywood: Tom has to be the number one.

Hillary Scott: Tom has to be there.

Annie: Oh, that's right. Tom had to be number one.

Dave Haywood: So you can be two through seven.

Hillary Scott: I just remember kind of surfing Myspace because it was such a place to discover music at that point—it was 2006—and I stumbled on Charles's music. And then a couple weeks later, I found myself at 12th and Porter, not far from here and I recognize him. So I just walk up to him and-

Annie: From Myspace.

Hillary Scott: From Myspace.

Annie: "Aren't you that guy that's Josh Kelley's number two friend?"

Charles Kelley: No one Hillary. This is the Hillary. We all know Hillary. She walks up to me. This is not a Hillary thing to do.

Annie: No.

Hillary Scott: Yeah. I just walked up and I said, "Hi, I'm Hillary, and I've heard your music and I think you're really good. It's nice to meet you."

Charles Kelley: She was hitting on me, let's be honest.

Annie: For sure. You can shake your head but we all were in 2006.

Charles Kelley: I was single.

Annie: We know what was happening.

Hillary Scott: It was really innocent, to be honest. I mean, it was so just...

Charles Kelley: No, I get it. No, it totally it. It was.

Hillary Scott: Now it's so weird because like-

Charles Kelley: I know. It sounds even gross to even think about it.

Hillary Scott: You're my brother.

Annie: We've also watched y'all sing "Need You Now" two thousand times. So we know.

Charles Kelley: It's all fake. It's all show.

Annie: Yeah, it's all made up. You're performing this whole thing.

Hillary Scott: So funny. But I-

Annie: Hillary is so lost now. She's like, "Get me out of this."

Charles Kelley: Basically... I'll take over.

Hillary Scott: Okay, take it.

Charles Kelley: You know I want to.

Annie: I did not know this was gonna happen.

Charles Kelley: Enneagram 7. Enneagram 7. So anyways, Dave, she comes over, I talked her into writing a song and she comes over-

Annie: And you invite Dave over too. Everybody is coming to the fancy house.

Charles Kelley: Well, Dave is there. Dave lives in there.

Annie: Oh, you're living in the house?

Dave Haywood: We live in the house. We live in the house.

Charles Kelley: And we're running out of money fast. I sell my truck... I mean, we don't have jobs, we're running money real fast. And she comes over, the first song we write is a song called "All We'd Ever Need," which is on our first record. The third one was "Love Don't Live Here."

Annie: The second one?

Hillary Scott: Second one was "Can't Take My Eyes Off You."

Charles Kelley: Second one was "Can't Take My Eyes Off You." And I told Dave, I was like, "I don't know what is..." I was like, "Something about this is really cool." And she had a little buzz in town and I was like, "I don't put any pressure on you. You keep doing your thing. But let's just on the side, do this."

Hillary Scott: A side project.

Charles Kelley: And then it kind of happened kind of after that for sure.

Hillary Scott: Because I've been pursuing music since I was 16 here in Nashville because I grew up here. And so I'd worked on that, I'd gotten a development deal on another label here in Nashville. I'd done a big showcase in March of 2006, and then they said no. They passed on me.

Annie: Will you explain what a showcase is for those of us that don't do anything like that?

Hillary Scott: Basically, they offered me a contract to let me kind of develop my songwriting, my artistry for about a year. And then at the end of that, you take that collection of songs, it's normally anywhere between three to five, and you book a place like this or a lot of times a lot smaller than this, and you perform." And so that's kind of your American Idol moment in front of the judges.

Annie: It's like the audience is full of executives.

Hillary Scott: Executives, publishers.

Annie: So you literally are doing a show of what you've worked on for a year, and afterwards they're gonna say yes or no to you being an artist in country music? People were like, "I've got to showcase next week," and you're like, "I'm sorry. That's scary."

Hillary Scott: It's nerve-racking. It really is. And it was heartbreaking because I thought that it was moving in a good direction. But God had completely other more incredible plans, because less than two months later is when we met each other, and then started writing shortly after that. I had never creatively felt more at home. Like I'd been writing for a really long time. I mean, instead of going anywhere on my senior year of high school spring break, I stayed in Nashville and wrote songs. That's how much I wanted it.

So to write and to be able to collaborate and connect on that creative level with Charles and David was just like... it felt like home. He jokes that he needed to twist my arm to the side project. It was just obvious that this was what was supposed to happen. And when we got on stage at 3rd & Lindsley, a couple literally walk that way... or maybe that way.

Annie: Guess what? It's audio. You can say "that way" and they'll be fine.

Hillary Scott: It's very true. We had so much fun. And then it was like, "Okay, wherever, however, we're doing this." And 15 years later, here we are.

Annie: This is year 15 that y'all been doing this?

Hillary Scott: Yeah.

Annie: I'm gonna ask you a real question. Why haven't you quit? Why haven't you quit?

Charles Kelley: Probably come close maybe a couple times, but we hadn't quit on each other. Let's say that.

Hillary Scott: Yes.

Charles Kelley: I think there's been moments where each of us individually come to find out later, as we really talked about it, had been in places individually separately that we were just kind of over each other or felt disrespected. And I will say I'm not the easiest person. Especially early on, I wasn't really able to listen to anybody's opinion. I had a vision and it was just the way I approached life. Marriage helped me a lot, my wife. Just kind of finding myself more. But I will say I probably was a big issue for a while. Daddy, lack of the drinkies. Definitely put us in a couple pickles at moments.

Annie: Oh, I love you so much. Dave, you gave up your whole life in Atlanta, you gave up a job that was safe to move into this guy's house.

Dave Haywood: I know. I'm now rethinking that entire moment in time.

Charles Kelley: It's still so shocking looking back.

Dave Haywood: I know. I've been enjoying just hearing the story again. It's so nostalgic and sweet. Because it was wild and crazy. And it was like we had no idea what we were doing.

Annie: Did you think it would work? Or what did you think? What made you go, "This is worth giving up my whole life to try?"

Dave Haywood: I don't know. I mean, honestly, I feel like God put it upon my heart. But I've always had this vision to just get out and try things. I love trying. I love being creative. Even if you fail it's worth it.

Annie: Yeah, absolutely.

Dave Haywood: I like the risk. I like the risk. I felt like I had a solid job. And I even told my accounting boss at the time, I was like, "I'm gonna go try music." He was like, "Really?" And he's like, "If you want to come back here when you fall flat on your face, you can come back." I don't know. I mean, honestly, I think Charles' validation of what we were doing was super encouraging to me.

Annie: You're like, "That guy was in Spork. He knows."

Dave Haywood: Yeah, yeah. Wait a minute, the guy from Spork.

Annie: "The guy from Spork says we're gonna make it, we're gonna make it."

Dave Haywood: But it was like... I don't know. I feel so blessed that we're here now in this moment today. I mean, looking back, it has to be God's providence. I mean, there's no other way to skin it to me. There's really no other way. It was an incredibly special journey. Those early days were just like we had no idea what we were doing. Now we pace things out. We try to really schedule our lives so it all makes sense. But those early days, you were just flying by the seat of your pants every day.

Annie: Okay. I'm going to read numbers that may embarrass y'all, but I'm going to do it. So just be with me for a minute. When you talk about God's providence and where you are now, 11 number one songs, 18 million albums sold, 18 million albums sold. I have like four of those. That is not helpful. 34 million tracks. And this—this number I had to confirm was not a lie—5 billion digital streams. I mean...

Charles Kelley: That's wild.

Annie: That's wild, right?

Charles Kelley: I've never heard that number. We've probably gotten paid a penny off those streams. They really...

Annie: Hey, brother, a penny for 5 billion. You're gonna be all right.

Charles Kelley: No, it's not about...

Annie: That's a lot of money. It's actually... the math of that is pretty extraordinary.

Charles Kelley: I was saying I know a penny for all of it. No, that's wild. I didn't hear that.

Annie: 5 billion.

Charles Kelley: Did you confirm that?

Annie: I did. I did.

Charles Kelley: That sounds a little bit like Taylor Swift or Bieber.

Annie: It's in the overall career info paragraph. So, yeah, it's true. It's really true.

Sponsor: Hey, friends, just taking another break from this conversation to share about our newest partner Policygenius. Y'all know how much I love confetti and try to find every excuse to use it. Well, the excitement you feel when you finally get life insurance would be a great time to use your favorite confetti bobber.

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And now back to our conversation with Hillary, Dave, and Charles.

Annie: I just think it is really profound to think that y'all were willing to try something you weren't sure would work, and each of you walked through seasons of pain the whole way through. I don't know that we've ever talked publicly. I went to college with Dave and Charles. We didn't meet at Georgia. I remember. Dave and I knew each other at Georgia.

And when I moved here in 2008, one of my friends said, "Hey, you know Dave Haywood lives in Nashville now and he's in a band." And I was like, "Oh, cool." And then another friend in Atlanta goes, "Well, my friend Hillary is up there, you should meet her. She's in a band." And then I get here and I'm like, "They're in the same band." That is unbelievable.

And so to walk this with y'all has felt like one of the most beautiful things to see. Hillary and I were talking earlier that there was a year that Hillary took me as her date to the Grammys because I'll never get there on my own scale. So I ate it up. And it was the first year y'all ever won a Grammy. Correct?

Dave Haywood: Yes, we won a Grammy.

Hillary Scott: Yes. We won for "I Run To You" that night, and then we perform "Need You Now" that night. And I'll never forget it, one, because it was the Grammys, and two, because a curtain fell on my head.

Annie: A curtain fell on her head. Have y'all seen this?

Hillary Scott: But my hair was teased up real high and somehow, by the grace of God, I got my hand up above my head just in time to where I like flew it off.

Annie: I mean, y'all performing on national TV on the Grammys, a curtain falls.

Charles Kelley: She was literally probably an inch from if she had not had her hand up, it would have gone all over and she would have been like-

Hillary Scott: A ghost.

Charles Kelley: ...with a ghost, "Picture perfect memories scatt..." No telling. We would have been a laughing stock.

Hillary Scott: It would have gone viral. It would have gone viral. I mean-

Annie: "Need You Now" went viral on its own by the way. So it didn't need you get knocked out cold in front of God and everybody. Can we talk for a minute about the new album?

Hillary Scott: Yes.

Charles Kelley: Yeah.

Annie: Because the other thing from another paragraph, it says—I love this—"The new music is not dedicated to the struggles of 2020 but it was born alongside them." That's beautiful. Who wrote that? That's beautiful.

Charles Kelley: I wrote everything on there.

Annie: Is that true of this new album "What A Song Can Do?" And it's called "What A Song Can Do [Chapter One]" which implies to me, Detective Annie, there's gonna be Chapter Two.

Dave Haywood: Wow. Yeah.

Charles Kelley: No, there is. Dave was actually highly concerned about that. Dave was like, "Are you sure we need to let them know there will be...?" I said, "Dave, when it says Chapter One, you just..." I don't know. I'm taking everybody...

Dave Haywood: It's good to hear you picked up on it.

Annie: I did. I did. I did. I drew my own conclusions.

Dave Haywood: I lost sleep over this for a whole night. I was like-

Charles Kelley: I was like, "Dave..."

Dave Haywood: We got a lot more music coming.

Charles Kelley: "...they will figure it out."

Annie: So it comes out when? End of this month?

Hillary Scott: June 25.

Annie: Okay. What?

Hillary Scott: The first chapter.

Annie: And "Like a Lady" is on it, right?

Hillary Scott: Yes.

Charles Kelley: Oh, yeah.

Annie: And when you performed it this week for the CMA Awards, was that the first time doing it live? No?

Hillary Scott: No. We performed it for the ACMs, and then we're on Ellen a couple weeks ago.

Dave Haywood: Played at the Opry.

Hillary Scott: And at the Opry.

Annie: You were at the Opry. Members of the Opry?

Hillary Scott: Yes, thank you.

Annie: That is a huge deal.

Hillary Scott: Thank you.

Annie: Nashville knows. That is a huge deal to be a member of the Opry.

Hillary Scott: Really was. But it was fun. And this past week for the CMT Awards, we had an all-girl band, and Carly Pearce came out and sang it with us and Lindsay Ell was playing guitar.

Annie: My friend Elizabeth Chan on the drum.

Hillary Scott: Yes.

Annie: She's amazing.

Hillary Scott: She's so awesome.

Dave Haywood: It was a fun, fun, fun...

Annie: Yeah, that was really fun.

Charles Kelley: It was very refreshing. Just like turning to me like, "Man, we have, I mean, some lady bosses band there, I mean, just really ripping the instruments."

Annie: Are you feeling that right now kinda?

Dave Haywood: Listen, I'm surrounded by strong women. My wife, Hillary, Kelli.

Charles Kelley: Kelli is very strong. Your manager, you Annie.

Annie: Thank you, Charles! I am right here to your left.

Charles Kelley: All these ladies out there, Woo-hoo. Strong women in the house.

Annie: [inaudible 00:48:10] that special anymore when you invited everybody and every girl on the planet, Charles. I was right here. Y'all go back out on tour at the end of July. How does it feel to see those dates and everything has come in?

Dave Haywood: I can't wait. I mean, again, this is from the guy who was talking about really loving the downtime. But you hit a point where like just being in community again... Even, I mean, honestly, the friendship and the camaraderie we have backstage is so fun. I just miss a lot of those moments too. There's just a lot of band and crew that I miss. But obviously, stepping into a place, the lights go down, kicking into our music. I mean, it's just the greatest feeling in the world, people singing back songs to you.

I kind of just can't wait for hot, sweaty nights out at these amphitheaters and sweating all over the gear and laughing and having a good time. I mean, it's like summer camp every year.

Annie: For our friends that are here and our friends listening, we're gonna do a couple questions that everybody gets to hear. And then we're going to save some just for the people that are in the room. But one of the questions I would love for y'all each to answer and then we'll talk about what sounds fun to you, as you're going into a new album launch, as you're going into a tour, going back out, when our friends think to pray for you, what do you want them to pray?

Hillary Scott: Well, I'll go first. Stamina. Because we're 18 plus months out from doing any kind of touring schedule. So stamina. And I think for me, personally, just my mom is hardly leaving my girls.

Annie: Are they not coming out?

Hillary Scott: They'll come out a little bit, but they're all starting school right at the beginning of August and so just want to keep them in their routine and they're so happy in it. So that'll be hard.

Annie: Dave.

Dave Haywood: I mean, I think prayers for balance like Hillary's talking about. But you know, something that always sticks out to me is I think prayers for us standing firm in what we're called to do and being proud of that, and standing firm that the Lord has us here for a reason, has us in these cities for a reason. I think I can be the first to be like, "Oh, my gosh, ticket sales are little low tonight, people don't love us. We're done." I just immediately go to the worst-case scenario possible.

So I think for me, it's, I don't know, trusting that we're called to be here, making music that hopefully touches people in a special way. I mean, I've had so many moments at shows where one person will say one thing that was so moving, and I'm like, "That's why we do it. I remember now." It might be at a meet and greet or something beforehand or it might be from a family friend after a show. I don't know. Those are the moments that made me go, "This is why we're out doing this for you. It was just for you tonight." So I think prayers to be reminded of that when it gets hard out there.

Charles Kelley: Yeah, to echo a lot of what you're saying, just appreciation. Pray for balance and appreciation. My prayers are always, especially if they're not with me, just to keep my wife and my little boys safe. That's always the first thing on my mind. It's like, "Dear Lord, just keep them safe." I'm always... I don't know. I got an only child. He's like kind of the center of our world. And so that's always at the forefront of my mind is when I'm away from them to keep them safe.

Annie: We will pray that. Y'all were very brave this year in a lot of ways, and it continues to make me so proud. It feels like an honor to get to pray y'all into this next season. The last question I always ask on the show, because the show is called That Sounds Fun, tell me what sounds fun to you. He wants to have his own podcast. That's what sounds fun to Charles. Brother, I got a network, let's talk. I got you.

Charles Kelley: I think too what does not sound fun is-

Annie: Okay. That's opposite.

Charles Kelley: The hot tub truck. Have y'all seen this downtown in Nashville? I was-

Annie: Why is she clapping?

Charles Kelley: My wife and I we went to dinner before this thing, we were driving and I was like, "Is that a hot tub in the back of a truck?"

Annie: So it's like one of the Pedal Tavern things but it's a hot tub?

Charles Kelley: It's a hot tub.

Annie: That's gross.

Charles Kelley: Girls in there just in a hot tub getting wasted.

Annie: In the back of truck?

Charles Kelley: And I'm like, "How is that fun? Are you going to invite people?" I don't know. It was a very interesting concept to me.

Hillary Scott: And even with all of the extra COVID protocol sanitation stuff, I could not. No, no, no, no.

Annie: That's like you're making friendship soup.

Charles Kelley: That is gross.

Annie: That is so gross.

Charles Kelley: Friendship soup.

Annie: That's so gross.

Charles Kelley: We'd like to start out with what's not fun and then we go to what's fun.

Annie: Yeah, yeah, yeah. Well, this is your show now. So you just gonna do all that now. I haven't been in charge in a long time.

Charles Kelley: Can we get a "That Sounds NOT Fun"?

Annie: With Charles Kelley.

Charles Kelley: With Charles Kelley.

Annie: What's your middle initial?

Charles Kelley: B.

Annie: Okay. B?

Charles Kelley: Burgess.

Dave Haywood: Burgess.

Annie: You're sure didn't tell everybody that they can steal your day burgess

Charles Kelley: Very regal. But what is fun... golf is very fun to me.

Annie: Yeah, you love it.

Charles Kelley: I will say that being on the stage. As you can tell, I like to be in front of people. It's an adrenaline rush.

Annie: Tell us more.

Charles Kelley: Getting on that stage is going to be a whole new fresh experience. I mean, there's something so nice in a weird way of being away from it because we're gonna appreciate it so much more. I missed that adrenaline rush every night.

Hillary Scott: We've talked about this a good bit in the last couple weeks as we've been doing a little bit more stuff around the record. But getting back out on tour, how many times in your life do you get the opportunity for something to feel new again?

Annie: Wow.

Hillary Scott: And that I think is something that I'm extremely grateful for. What sounds fun to me is and it's not just because I'm here with you, but we're long overdue on a girls' night. And that sounds very fun to me.

Annie: Oh, yeah. Let's do it.

Hillary Scott: It is just some good time with you...

Charles Kelley: You want me to call that hot tub? Get you a couple girls. I can go ahead and say it fit A comfortably from the outside looking in. And they had definitely some good jams going.

Annie: Okay. Okay, yeah. Would you like to make friendship soups? Very interesting. Dave, what sounds fun to you?

Dave Haywood: I don't know. I can't follow either of those. I mean, honestly, I love being silly. I think one of my favorite things... my wife and I made some funny silly parody videos last year during-

Annie: They were not casual. You got nominated for a CMT Award.

Dave Haywood: I know. I know. My wife got a really big head really fast. I'm kidding. Honey, I love you. But I don't know. Being silly. For me, that kind of connects the dots of feeling like a

kid again. Like playing and just being silly and joking. We did the parody songs. I mean, we just rolled laughed trying to write these funny songs about...

Annie: Will you say the title so people can look them up if they haven't heard them?

Dave Haywood: Sure. Absolutely, yes. The first song we wrote was called "Just Another Day In Quarantine."

Annie: To the to the tune of-

Dave Haywood: To the tune of "Just Another Day In Paradise" by Phil Vassar. My wife and I love 90s country. It was my favorite era in terms of music.

Annie: Same.

Dave Haywood: And then we wrote a song about zooming called "We Zoomed." It was really funny if you see the video. It sounds a little flat till you put it all together and watch the video.

Annie: There's more words than by the way. That's not the whole song.

Charles Kelley: Yeah, there's more.

Dave Haywood: To a Brad Paisley song about "We danced." So we zoomed.

Annie: Yes, yes, thank you. Yes. Because you made it sound like we wrote a song. "We Zoomed by..." That was it. And there's way more to it."

Charles Kelley: Just a jingle.

Annie: Yeah, that's more of a jingle they would say.

Dave Haywood: Anyways, I don't know, being silly and being fun. I mean, just feeling like a kid again doing that.

Annie: You guys, thank you for doing this.

Charles Kelley: Thank you.

Dave Haywood: Thank you.

Annie: It means the world to me. Will y'all please thank Lady A for joining us today.

Outro: Oh, you guys, aren't they the best? Oh, my gosh, these live shows! I'm absolutely loving that y'all get to hear them, hear the crowd response, hear these moments that we captured. Oh, I just love it! And Hillary, Dave, and Charles are three of the very best.

Make sure you check out their new album "What A Song Can Do [Chapter One]" and give them a follow at Lady A if you're not following them already. Tell them thanks so much for being on the show. If you need anything else from me, you know I'm embarrassingly easy to find. Annie F. Downs on Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook, all the places you may need me. That's how you can find me.

I think that's it for me today, friends. Go out or stay home. Do something that sounds fun to you. And I will do the same. Have a great week. We'll see you back here on Wednesday with a crowd favorite from our live show in Kansas City, Trey Kennedy.