

the village VOICE

DIERKS BENTLEY & BRANDY CLARK ON FARMBOROUGH, NEW YORK & COUNTRY COMMUNITY

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BY DACEY ORR

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Dierks Bentley and Brandy Clark play FarmBorough at Randalls Island June 26-28.

Nino Munoz / David McClister

On June 26, FarmBorough will descend upon Randalls Island for three days of boot-stomping good times from artists like Luke Bryan, Maddie & Tae, Sturgill Simpson, and more. [This week's cover story](#) dived into what the festival could mean for New York and for country music, talking to the organizers – Live Nation as well as Gov Ball masterminds Founders Entertainment – along with some of the artists. Here are the excerpts from our conversations with performers Dierks Bentley and Brandy Clark that didn't make it into print.

On playing in New York City:

Dierks Bentley: I love the city. I eat it up. I feel like when I go up there, I get my batteries totally charged. It's the best shot of electricity – just something about being there. I remember the last time I played Irving Plaza, I sat up there in [Union Square] working on my setlist and you could see them coming. Even in the mass of people, you could see the country fans coming: the girls with cowboy boots, or here comes the dude in the trucker hat or the cowboy hat. You see them coming from all different directions and heading towards this focal point. It was pretty cool. Looking ahead to FarmBorough, just thinking about the fact that there's gonna be – how many thousands of fans – all gathered together? It's gonna be pretty cool.

Brandy Clark: The first time I played [New York] was at Joe's Pub for the CMT Songwriters Series. I didn't know what to expect – that was my first time in New York City, too. It's become one of my favorite places on the planet, and that was only like two years ago. I was blown away by the country music fans in New York City. Then I came back a few months later and opened the Bowery Ballroom for Kacey Musgraves, when she started her Same Trailer Different Tour. That was wonderful. That was probably 700 people standing in the crowd. I looked out and I could see people singing along to every word of every song, and that was pretty amazing.

On the way country music supports up-and-coming artists:

Clark: My first tour was with Jennifer Nettles [of Sugarland] and she couldn't have been more inclusive towards me. I didn't want to get up onstage and sing with her – I was intimidated to do that – and she insisted I do it. It was one of the best things I ever did for my onstage confidence. Eric Church was just a fan of my record, and instead of just saying that, he took me out on tour with him. Alan Jackson views myself and Jon Pardi as people who are carrying the flame for traditional country music, so he made us his openers. Country music takes care of its own, for sure.

Bentley: Everyone supports each other in different ways in country music. You hear stories about people wanting to open for someone in the rock or pop world...You may only get half the P.A. system, or you may not get to use all the lights. In country, it's totally different. I mean, yeah, we're competing in some way, but you don't get that vibe out there on the road. Everyone is just there to help each other, support each other. "Hey, you wanna use my video wall? Go for it." We give our openers everything that we have because we want their show to be great. It makes the show for the fans; it makes the show great. We want it to be the best experience all the way around. The more pumped-up my openers can get the crowd, the better that makes it for us. It's just a good community of people. At festivals, we're always excited to see each other – we don't get to see each other that often other than festivals and occasionally

awards shows. So it's a fun vibe for artists, and I think that kind of spills off onto the stage. You can sense everyone having a really good time.

On country's close connection between the fans and the artists:

Clark: The fans are the reason why we get to do this job, so I think that connection is really important. I know that for me it starts out with a couple that are really, really, for lack of a better word, fanatical. They find other people; they introduce other people to your music, and so I always try to do my best to treat the fans – and those fans in particular, those early fans – extra special. I want them to feel how much I appreciate them. I mean, there's one girl that has been to like 21 of my shows in the last year. That blows my mind. And she's not only a fan of me, she's a fan of the guys in my band. And that's a special...I mean, that's a commitment. There are other people that have gotten my name tattooed on their arm! That's another big commitment! And I was a fan: I remember I was a huge Patty Loveless fan – I remember trying to get on Patty Loveless's bus because I wanted to meet her so bad. And so I would never want anyone to feel anything but gratitude from me. Had I met Patty Loveless on a bad day and she been rude to me, it would have crushed me. So I always try to be very grateful and just make sure that they know how much I appreciate them.

Bentley: You know, when one person finds out another person's a country music fan, it's like someone that drives a Harley-Davidson sees another Harley guy. You already got some sort of connection. It's a thing. I think it's like, "Oh, you're a country fan?" You already feel like you know that person 70 percent. It has kind of a community element to it. As far as the fans go, which I am certainly one of them, I think the reason why you see CD sales still high in country music is that fans aren't just buying a song. They're buying a piece of the artist: They want ownership. That's why I still buy CDs. I want to feel the packaging and have the packaging. I want to read it, read who worked on the record and what players played on it. Who wrote these songs? I want to read the thank-yous. Fans still want to own a piece of that artist, not just the music.

On FarmBorough and playing festivals:

Clark: When someone comes to a concert, they might be a huge Eric Church fan. But I think when someone comes to a festival they're a huge country music fan or Americana music fan or rock 'n' roll fan, or whatever the festival is. Whenever I go to a festival, I go and I want to see everybody. So that's the thing, the real positive thing, about a festival.

Bentley: I love playing festivals: the bigger the crowd, the better. Multiple lineups means not only do I get to sing and do our thing and try to kill it, but I get the chance to watch other bands play. In country music you get a lot of fairs: county fairs, state fairs, country jamborees. Technically they're festivals, but they don't really have the same vibe as something like some of these things with Brian O'Connell, who's doing FarmBorough, where it really feels special and it really feels like you're part of something very new and very current. Nothing against anything else out there – I love all the shows we play – but a couple of these things, like FarmBorough, there's just an attention to detail. It feels fresh and new, and it feels like it's kind of caught up with where music is right now.

On lack of diversity in country and recent remarks on females being the "tomato" on the salad of country music:

Clark: That guy got a lot of flak for saying that. I'm glad he said it, because it's the truth and it shines a light on it. Because he could have said something else, and I think that it's made a lot of people really mad and hopefully what that'll do is that'll bring about change.

I see a lot of people wearing the tomato shirts, which is great, but I think, "Man, I wish they would buy a female's CD, a female record." Maybe I'm naive. Maybe I'm just hopeful because I'm a female in country, and I know for me that everything would be better if females were playing – not just if I were playing, but females – because as a songwriter, it's been a struggle for me because there just aren't a lot of places to go with songs. Most females write a lot more female songs than they write male songs.

I've always loved a tomato on a salad, so I wasn't as offended by that as a lot of people. I really honestly am glad that that was said, because it is the truth. And I guess some people just have to hear it to really see, "Oh yeah, that really is the way it is." When I turn on the radio, I go a long time without hearing a female voice. And so that's not shocking to me that he would say that females are the tomato on the

to me that he would say that females are the tomato on the salad. I just hope that the light being shone on that comment will make it so that we have more of a caprese salad. That's what I hope for.

Dierks Bentley and Brandy Clark play FarmBorough at Randalls Island June 26–28. For lineup info, a full schedule, and ticket information, [click here](#).