



## Country singer Dierks Bentley brings the party to Fresno concert

Dierks Bentley promised a party for the sold-out crowd at the Save Mart Center Saturday night.

He delivered that and then some in a two-hour performance that spanned close to 20 songs and left the singer kneeling and breathless at the front of the stage.

That was before the encore, which had a surprise reveal of its own and ended with a dozen or so fans dancing on stage.

This should come as no surprise. Bentley is known for party-centric country rock. He's a T-shirt-and-jeans, out-West country singer, who travels with his own bar and invites fans on stage to shotgun beers (at the Fresno show he pulled a guy up from the crowd) and embarrasses them with how good he is at it (in the case of the Fresno fan, at least).

His openers for this tour were Cole Swindell, a guy who has a song ("No Can Left Behind") dedicated to crushing a 12-pack or two. Even Jon Pardi, whose songs aren't so obvious, understood the theme of the night: You work hard for nights like this, so you can let loose and have some fun.

And there it is. Bentley and his crew know how to have a good time and that comes across in the performance and in the crowd. It was Bentley's first sell-out at the arena (though he played there back in 2015) and if he is to be believed, his favorite show of the tour so far, even better than the Stagecoach Festival, where he headlined Friday night.

Oddly, the country singer is musically at his best when he steps away from the straight-ahead party songs; the opener, "Up on the Ridge," for example, or "Home," which may have been my highlight of the night. His duet with Pardi on the George Strait tune "Fireman" would be a strong second.

### **Stray observations:**

- **This was the first concert I've seen where the encore offered a real surprise. It involved a plane and Bentley doing some pretty good acting. Those who left early really missed out.**
- **For those counting, Swindell wore two different Fresno State T-shirts and praised the heck out of Dog House Grill.**
- **He also asked the crowd to "bounce" with him, which it totally did. Traditional country fans would cringe, no doubt.**
- **I've see that thing arena crowds do with the cellphone lights at almost every one of these kinds of shows. It's still impressive. That "FresNo? FresYes!" line? Not so much.**
- **The idea of holding people inside the pit area in front of the stage while Bentley made his way through the crowd did not sit well with fans. Things got dicey for a moment with angry fans yelling at security.**