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Dierks Bentley has love for Nashville and a bromance with Dean



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The connection is undeniable, but neither can pinpoint exactly where or when the bromance between Dierks Bentley and Nashville Mayor Karl Dean started. In separate interviews, though, the pair guessed that NHL hockey brought them together.

“The Preds came to town, and that was the place where the celebs hang out, the cool place to be. I’d always see the mayor there a bunch,” Bentley said.

“We would run into each other at Preds games and talk,” Dean said. “He is a very passionate fan.”

It’s one of the relationships that has Bentley (with apologies to Vince Gill) turning into the face of Nashville.

Bentley is about to host his 10th annual Miles & Music for Kids fundraiser for the Monroe Carell Jr. Children's Hospital at Vanderbilt. The concert is set for Nov. 1 at the new Ascend Amphitheater downtown.

But that's not all.

It was Bentley who performed earlier this year at Dean's final State of Metro address.

And when the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp. landed a convention of convention planners last year? The NCVC tapped Bentley to entertain and woo those folks.

Earlier this year, Bentley headlined a fundraiser concert for the Green Hills YMCA, which gave him discounted membership rates before his career took off.

Dean's last term may be winding down, but Bentley probably will remain one of Music City's most loyal and visible cheerleaders.

"I feel really passionate about the city. I love its growth," he said, "and at the same time, I mourn losing some of the old Nashville."

Bentley, an Arizona native, came to the "old Nashville" after transferring to Vanderbilt University in the mid-1990s.

"I was living with a bunch of dudes in a house, Natchez Trace and Fairfax. Nowadays it's a nice location. Back then in 1994, it was kind of a dump."

But his fixation with Music City started before that. Bentley's father introduced his boy to the music of Hank Williams Jr., Alan Jackson and Clint Black. Dierks knew early on he'd end up in Nashville.

"It's Music City, and that's where country music was coming from," he figured.

After graduating from Vandy, Bentley got a job at The Nashville Network, an internship at the Country Music Association and a few hangovers on Lower Broadway.

Dierks Bentley played The Station Inn long before heBuy Photo
Dierks Bentley played The Station Inn long before he had a major label deal and his first album. (Photo: File / The Tennessean)
He also discovered a cinder-block bluegrass club called The Station Inn in what was then an oft-overlooked area of town called the Gulch.

Bentley played there as well as at honky-tonks and clubs everywhere, including Wolfy's, the Music City Lounge and Springwater by the Parthenon.

By 2003, he had a major label deal and his first album out. The song "What Was I Thinking" launched him, slowly, into country music fame.

Eventually, Bentley's career exploded, and several years later, Nashville did, too.

"It's a really different town than it was seven years ago," Bentley said.

"It takes 20 more minutes to get anywhere. But it's such a great city. It's changed a lot, mostly for the better."

After he met Mayor Dean, Bentley ran into him a lot.

"I was out a lot, he was out a lot. I would see him everywhere."

Bentley really got a kick out of Dean and his wife visiting the country star backstage at Bonnaroo. And the bromance grew. It culminated when Bentley opened for the mayor at Dean's last State of Metro address.

"I don't do too much political stuff, but he's a friend. An email came my way," Bentley said.

"It was a chance to say yes to say thanks to someone who's done such a great job."

Bentley loved that gig so much, he stuck around for the actual speech.

"I'm still a student (of Nashville), still learning. I got a chance to peek behind the curtain."

Dean feels like he might've gotten upstaged at his own event.

"I hate to admit, he was the highlight of it, not me," the mayor said.

But if Dean is gonna be upstaged by anybody, well, why not Bentley.

"He's a real friendly guy, real smart guy, clearly loves Nashville, and he thinks about Nashville and how it's changing."

Miles & Music for Kids already sold out

The 10th annual Miles & Music For Kids celebrity motorcycle ride and concert in Nashville sold out in a day.

Florida Georgia Line, Thomas Rhett, Cole Swindell, The Cadillac Three, Canaan Smith and Brooke Eden will play Nov. 1 at Ascend Amphitheater after an hourlong ride that starts at the Harley-Davidson of Columbia.

Country broadcaster Storme Warren will emcee the concert.

