

(10/26):http://www.roanoke.com/arts_and_entertainment/dierks-bentley-s-black-album-i-s-nd-collaboration-with-glenvar/article_1d8cc1c9-7744-5309-aed6-a8116432d718.html

Dierks Bentley's 'Black' album is 2nd collaboration with Glenvar graduate Ross Copperman

Last time Dierks Bentley hit Roanoke, he had some stiff competition. It was a high school football Friday night, which has hurt an act or two in these parts — and worse, Garth Brooks was playing the same night in Greensboro, North Carolina.

Bentley, at that time enjoying the success of his album “Riser” and its marquee single, “Drunk on a Plane,” still drew about 5,100 to Berglund Coliseum.

When he returns to the 8,000-seat venue Saturday, he will have the night pretty much to himself. Virginia Tech will have played an away game on Thursday, and as Bentley said in a phone call last week, “Garth is not within a 300-mile radius. He takes up a lot of bandwidth.”

Like last time, though, he’ll be touring with a successful album, “Black,” and a couple of hit singles, “Somewhere on a Beach” and “Different for Girls” — the latter a duet with alt-pop singer Elle King. “Black” marks the second collaboration with in-demand Nashville, Tennessee, producer and songwriter Ross Copperman, a Glenvar High School and James Madison University graduate.

The two have become close during their time working together, and Bentley is trying to get the ever-busy Copperman to head for Roanoke on Saturday. After having one producer, Brett Beavers, for the majority of a major label album career that started in 2003, Bentley began working with Copperman after the former Roanoke Valley boy

co-wrote the Bentley hit, “Tip It On Back,” in 2012. A couple of years later, “Riser” dropped, and the hits kept coming, along with a Grammy Award nomination for best country album.

“He’s just a great producer and a great friend, and I’m thankful to have him here on my team,” Bentley said. “I wouldn’t be having the success I’m having at all without switching producers to Ross.”

In an email exchange, Copperman said he is hoping to make the show at Berglund. “Dierks Bentley is one of my best friends, and I’m so proud of the music we’ve made together,” Copperman wrote. “He’s an absolute visionary and an exceptional talent.”

He added: “I’m in this to make the best records possible with Dierks. He’s such a unique artist, and it’s a huge honor for him to trust me with his music. That is something I will never take for granted.”

“Black” debuted in late May atop Billboard magazine’s country albums chart and at No. 2 in the publication’s all-genre top 200, the best yet for Bentley. “Somewhere on a Beach” and “Different for Girls” logged in as his 14th and 15th No. 1 country singles. He received four Country Music Association Award nominations — best album, best male vocalist, best video (for “Somewhere on a Beach”) and musical event of the year with King, who had scored her own hit on the pop and alternative rock charts with “Ex’s and Oh’s.” The awards show happens live Nov. 2, on ABC.

Nominations and wins are nothing new to Bentley, who has collected CMA, Country Music Television and Academy of Country Music trophies, along with multiple Grammy nominations. He put their importance into perspective.

“I don’t take it for granted,” he said. “There’s so many people playing in a bar right now in Nashville, to be one of the people who has made it in this business, it’s a huge deal. I’m so appreciative. I would love to win, and I love being nominated.

“But I’ve been doing it for a long time, and I know what goes on in the [Nashville] 615 area code is not real life. When I’m on stage in Roanoke and there’s thousands of people who have bought a ticket, bought a beer, maybe bought a T-shirt, paid for

parking, maybe had a crappy week — and here they are, screaming my songs back to me — there's no other podium I could stand on better than that one.”

King wasn't his only performing partner on “Black.” The record features guest spots from hot newcomer Maren Morris (“I'll Be The Moon”) and New Orleans jazz/funk horn man Troy “Trombone Shorty” Andrews (“Mardi Gras”). But don't expect video screens to show those acts performing canned tracks to accompany Bentley. For example, songwriters pitched “Different for Girls” for just Bentley to sing, and it works well that way live, he said.

He will have opening acts Randy Houser and Drake White onstage with him for some collaboration. Houser was here to open for him in 2014, when Bentley joked with the crowd that he chooses as touring partners “the best singers, and people who are the most fun to drink with after the show, not necessarily in that order.”

Bentley considers Houser to be among country music's best singers, “operatic” in range. White, newer to the scene, is “so soulful,” Bentley said. He gives both of them the tools to do their best sets.

“The goal for me: I want guys who are going to go up onstage every night and try to kick my butt,” he said. “We're all competitive people, that's how we got here. I give them everything. My lighting guy gives them all my lights. Our sound guy gives them all the sound they want. ... If you can make your show sound better with my gear, then maybe you should have my job.

“In the end, the people that win are the fans. ... By the time I get up there, the people are fired up.”