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Dierks Bentley & Elle King on Why 'Different for Girls' Is a Different Kind of Country Hit

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Dierks Bentley and Elle King took time to celebrate the success of their Country Airplay chart-topper “Different for Girls” at trendy Nashville eatery Moto on Tuesday, and one thing is very apparent: There’s a mutual respect between the two artists from different genres and a genuine warmth, as many times the duo would try to see who could make the other crack up the most during a morning press conference.

When asked how each artist's fanbase has respected the other, King didn't miss a beat: "You have a lot more fans than I do. So I've gotten some of his. I saw today that one of his fans and one of her friends made two dolls. The girl was mad because she had to make a straw Elle King because she wanted to make a straw Dierks."

Bentley chuckled at the singer's comments while saying he feels that Nashville really has accepted King. "Last time we were in town together, it was amazing. The whole community took Elle in and really made her feel welcome. I think she's got a lot of fans in the country world. We always need strong female voices in town. ... There's a lot of girls who can relate to her and look up to her for inspiration. I feel like my fans have embraced her. I don't know whether her fans have embraced me," he quipped.

King refused to let the subject die, saying, "No, that's not true. He's so handsome. I have a lot of girlfriends and guy friends who think you're handsome too," adding, "My mom is his number one fan."

Bentley knows the song is a little bit different from songs such as "What Was I Thinkin'," his first chart-topper back in 2003. Since then, he's become a husband and a father, and while he feels those events haven't affected his music, he did admit that life happens and one has to adjust to it.

"I don't think my music has changed to reflect getting married or having kids. But ... if you want to continue to write your own songs, you've got to find deeper stuff to write about. You've got to go to different places. When I go onstage now and sing 'What Was I Thinkin',' I still feel like the same guy who wrote that song and I can feel that moment, but if I wrote it today, it probably wouldn't be as authentic. I'm not running through cornfields and the police isn't chasing me as much these days," he joked.

The Capitol recording artist says while he's not necessarily singing about diaper changes or baby bottles, he feels his life has always been reflected in his music. "I don't want to write songs about kids or stuff like that, but I feel like I've always written songs about my life -- whether it was 'Modern Day Drifter,' when I was on the road 300 days a year, or now, the song 'Black.' Where I'm at in my relationship with my wife or my family and life in general, I feel like it all comes out in the music. Hopefully, it's always there, but in an ambiguous and abstract way and not real straightforward."

When asked about her approach to the song, King admitted some of the lyrics were spot-on. "I got sent the song, and I didn't know what they were going to have me sing," she said. "Truly, I tried to learn it on the way to the studio. It happened that quickly when I finally called him back. I didn't know what he wanted, but I remembered listening to the song and just laughing about how he's singing about girls reacting differently to a breakup. I do all the bad things we sing about in the song. I'm really messy. I don't get out of bed. I drink -- or I used to," she teased.

The success of the song also earned a vocal collaboration of the year nomination from the CMA Awards next month. "I didn't ever expect it," King said of the nomination, "but now looking back, I'm singing with him, so of course that would have happened. It's a total honor, and it means I get to come and hang out with him and get free booze -- so it's a win-win."

The nod is one of three for Bentley, and he says you can't take them for granted because there's always someone out there wanting that slot. "You know, when you think about it, there are great people playing down on Lower Broad at this moment. The competition is so stiff, and that's the next generation trying to get their way up here. It's really hard to be in the top five of anything in this town. I never had any expectations on it. This is the song that I lost sleep about it being a single because I was scared people weren't going to get it or it would be too much for people to handle. So for it to be nominated is a huge deal. A lot of collaborations happened this year, so that's really cool."

In addition to the No. 1 party, the duo was looking forward to performing the song Tuesday at the Grand Ole Opry -- an event King never could have imagined. "It means the world to me," she said. "I don't know if people know how much I grew up loving country music. I can't really get my words out about it, because I'm nervous. I'm so excited but a little tongue-tied today,"

As for Bentley, he's in the final stages of his Somewhere on a Beach Tour and will begin his next outing -- titled What the Hell -- on Jan. 19 in Dayton, Ohio, with Cole Swindell and Jon Pardi as his opening acts. Two days after the tour commences, Bentley will play his first headlining gig at Nashville's Bridgestone Arena, which he admits will be a night he won't forget. After all, before he made it, he played literally up and down Lower Broadway. "That's going to be a really special moment. Just thinking about it doesn't seem real. It won't be until I poke my head around the corner and see Cole out there getting them fired up. It's one of those things that is hard to actually think about. I remember one night, a buddy of mine called me and said he would give me dinner at the Palm if you bring your guitar down and sing for some of my friends. Kenny Chesney was onstage at Bridgestone that night, and I was across the street at the Palm. I sang a few songs and got a steak dinner. I felt like I was opening for Kenny that night. You know, in a way, you can justify anything, even though I wasn't in the same building. It will be a special moment."