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## Review: Dierks Bentley opens DTE season with a boozy good time



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INDEPENDENCE TWP. — “I’m not here to put on a show,” Dierks Bentley informed a near sell-out crowd Sunday night, May 22, at the DTE Energy Music Theatre. “I’m here to have a good time. This is my Sunday funday, too.”

But because the country star’s show — the sixth on his summer Somewhere On A Beach Tour — IS about having a good time, Bentley did a little of both, to good effect, as he opened DTE’s 2016 season.

As the weekend-ender and Bentley’s third straight night on stage, Sunday’s 18-song, nearly 90-minute show had a loose and decidedly spirited feel, with Bentley’s voice showing just a bit of a fatigue from the run. “I’m not just singing the drinking songs. I live the life,” Bentley, who sported a Detroit T-shirt, told the crowd before eschewing a cup of between-song tea a crew member brought

him, calling instead for a shot of vodka. And that was just a few songs after the “reigning champ of shotgun beer” had re-established his dominance by beating a fan he’d brought up from the audience.

All that only complemented Bentley’s performance, however. He came out swinging with the rootsy “Up On The Ridge” from his bluegrass-styled album of the same name before cranking into the country rock of “Free and Easy (Down The Road I Go),” “Tip It On Back” and “5-1-5-0.” Previewing his upcoming new album “Black” with four songs — including the title track and the single “Somewhere On a Beach” that gave the tour its title — Bentley and his five-piece band offered its most sophisticated production yet, romping around an angular, tri-level stage as well as the requisite B-stage in the middle of the DTE pavilion.

Bentley got there and back with long walks through the amphitheater aisles, going by way of the lawn as he sang “Feel That Fire” and was unashamedly groped by fans — who Bentley thanked for the free colonoscopy. He was joined by opening acts Randy Houser and Cam for the Eagles’ “Take It Easy” — an unintentional but still well-received tribute to the group’s late Glenn Frey, a Royal Oak native — and then played the new album’s “Freedom” before coming back to the main stage for a final run that included stomping renditions of “What Was I Thinkin’ “ and “Sideways.”

Houser, Cam and the night’s other opener, Tucker Beathard, trooped out for the encore of “Drunk On a Plane” — or, should we say, stage. No matter; Whether the inebriation was actual or theatrical, Bentley delivered a full-throttle weekend party that gave the DTE season a rousing liftoff.