

Rolling Stone



Dierks Bentley's Interview With Foo Fighters Guitarist: 5 Things We Learned

Ahead of new album 'Black,' Bentley chats with Chris Shiflett for his 'Walking the Floor' podcast

RSCountry | BY ANDREW LEAHEY May 23, 2016

<http://www.rollingstone.com/music/news/dierks-bentleys-interview-with-foo-fighters-guitarist-5-things-we-learned-20160523?page=2>

With his newest album, *Black*, set for release this Friday, May 27th, Dierks Bentley met up with Foo Fighters guitarist Chris Shiflett earlier this spring to tape an installment of Shiflett's podcast. Their conversation drifted from Whitesnake's "Still of the Night" to Hank Williams Jr.'s "Man to Man," with both musicians swapping road stories and songwriting tips along the way. Their dialogue forms the basis of Shiflett's newest *Walking the Floor*, a biweekly show that finds the guitarist talking shop with country stars and Americana icons.

Recorded in Nashville while Bentley prepared for a business trip to Europe, the *Walking the Floor* episode presents Bentley not only as a musician, but as a genuine music fan. Here are five of the biggest takeaways from the conversation, which doubles as the first installment of Shiflett's podcast to be released by the PodcastOne network.

1. Bentley was a hair-metalhead.

Like Carrie Underwood, Bentley grew up on hair metal. He was a teenager during the late Eighties, when rock acts like Van Halen and Def Leppard blanketed the airwaves. When another friend expressed interest in learning the

electric guitar, the two began working together to learn some of the era's most popular riffs. . .although Bentley wasn't as quick as his buddy to master those dive-bombs. "We were working on a Whitesnake riff or something," Bentley remembers, humming the riff of "Still of the Night," "and his pick and his fingers were so much more coordinated than me. It was frustrating. He was advancing so much further than I was, so much quicker. So I worked on more Look What the Cat Dragged In power chords, like Poison. I discovered early on that I was more of a strummer than a picker."

2. When it comes to the tour bus, Bentley doesn't pull rank.

Some of his bandmates have been playing with him since his earliest shows in Nashville, and they receive the same amenities as Bentley himself. "It's really healthy for the long-term longevity of a band," he says. "We're super close. We all ride in the same bus together. I don't have a bunk in the back; we're all just in the center aisle. I try to treat it as equally as possible. I will look out for those guys, because I know when they're happy and their families are happy, our show is gonna be better."

3. As a kid, Bentley listened to a mix of his dad's country music and his sister's pop cassettes.

Country music had become increasingly popular during the Eighties, and, while growing up in Phoenix, Bentley tuned in at the right time. "By the time I was 15 or 16," he says, "that was the 'Class of '89,' so you had Alan Jackson, Garth Brooks, Marty Stuart, Dwight Yoakam, Steve Earle. There was a lot of good music coming out of Nashville." At the same time, he also found himself drawn to his sister's music, which included artists like U2, Madonna and Michael Jackson. That shared love of country twang and pop hooks would later find a home in his own music, although Bentley has left his teenaged attempts at mimicking a different artist — "I spiked my hair like Billy Idol," he says proudly — in the past.

4. Hank Williams Jr. was his gateway drug to country music.

Rock, metal and pop albums all had a place in Bentley's tape collection as a teenager, but it was Hank Williams Jr.'s "Man to Man" that convinced him to focus on country music. "It was just testosterone-filled, rock & roll guitars, attitude. . .nothing I'd ever heard before in my life," he says of the song, which appeared on Bocephus's Lone Wolf in 1990. "Honestly, that's one of three moments in my life where it's like a coin going down a slot machine, and all the letters go click, click, click. Boom! I was 17 and I moved to Nashville two years later. I was hooked."

5. Bentley's first Number One album was cut in little more than a week.

These days, it can take a year or longer to piece together a concept album like Black. Eleven years ago, though, Bentley cranked out Modern Day Drifter in less than a dozen days, sandwiching the studio sessions between a seemingly infinite string of tour dates. "We were on the road over 300 dates that year," he recalls. "I came off the road for 11 days and made this record in an 11-day stretch. You can

do that when you're single, but even then, it wasn't the most enjoyable experience, because we were just hitting the road so hard. I really appreciate the way rock bands do it, when you're touring and then you stop touring and make a record, and you set it back up again. That's kind of what we did for the first time in my career with this record that's about to come out. But usually, in country, nothing links up that way. We're always touring, so it's hard to get that downtime to make a record."