



## Dierks Bentley goes dark on his new relationship record

By KRISTIN M. HALL May. 26, 2016 6:46 AM EDT



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Country star Dierks Bentley may be known for his boozy party songs like "Drunk On a Plane" or "5-1-5-0," but as a singer, he loves going dark.

He's even named his new album "Black."

"Sad country music is way better than happy country music," the Grammy-nominated Bentley said. "Happy country music is good for the live show. It's good for driving your car to work. The greatest country music is the sad stuff. That's where you learn stuff. That's how you get through stuff."

The 40-year-old singer named the album, out on Friday, after his wife Cassidy's

maiden name, which he loved so much he tried to convince her to keep it.

"When we got married, I was like, 'You should just keep the name Cassidy Black, it's so cool,'" said Bentley, who often takes the stage in a plain black T-shirt. "I'll change my name to Dierks Black. I just like the color black."

The title track is one of Bentley's sexiest songs of his career, a sultry bedroom ballad that allowed him to frame the entire album around the story lines of love, loss and heartache. He explores the self-doubt that comes while watching someone slip out of a relationship on "Why Do I Feel" and cheating lovers meeting in secret on a duet with Maren Morris on "I'll Be the Moon."

But Bentley also has learned from previous albums that fans, and radio stations, still want the fun Dierks, too. His first single, the summery "Somewhere on a Beach," hit No. 1 on Billboard's Hot country chart, and his next single, "Different for Girls," features pop-rocker Elle King.

"I just hit it off with her right away," Bentley said of the "Ex's and Oh's" singer. "She's just really self-deprecating and funny, but a great singer."

More than a decade into his career, Bentley, who recently hosted the Academy of Country Music Awards with Luke Bryan, is adept at finding the balance on albums now. He is the country joker, the bluegrass picker, the love song singer and the stadium rocker all packaged together.

"If people want to go buy a single and go party to it, that's great," Bentley said. "I am trying to make a record for me as much as I am trying to make a record for my fans."

So he has no regrets about ending the album on a sad note, an acoustic guitar ballad called "Can't Be Replaced," in which he sings about his aging 15-year-old dog Jake, who has been with him since before he had a wife and kids and became a star.

"The very first song I ever put out to country radio, 'What Was I Thinking,' had a picture of Jake on the cover and had a big dobro solo in that song," Bentley said. "So it's kinda like the perfect bookend to the last eight records and really to his life."