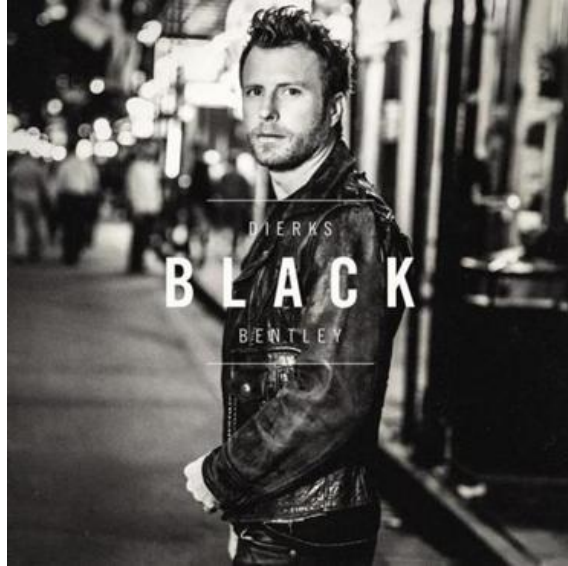


The Boston Globe

COUNTRY

Dierks Bentley addresses heartbreak with soft-rock bombast on 'Black'



<https://www.bostonglobe.com/arts/music/2016/05/25/new-album-black-dierks-bentley-addresses-heartbreak-with-soft-rock-bombast/sjd1dRd17np7Y9nPrV4MCM/story.html>

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Dierks Bentley often gets lumped in with the bro-country bros, but songs about girls, beer, and/or trucks have always been only part of his story. On his new record, they're none of the story. Aided by a bevy of female singers including Maren Morris and Elle King, Bentley spends much of "Black" on love's dark and troubled side: attempting to resurrect a dead relationship in the wordplay-clever "Pick Up," despairing of infidelity's no-win result in "I'll Be the Moon." He makes an even more striking departure with the way this record sounds: Bentley has excelled throughout his career at combining recognizable elements of the country tradition with his own take on the form, but there are only occasional vestiges of that here. Instead, echoey wall-of-sound sheen, soft-rock flourishes, guitar bombast, and omnipresent programming predominate. Presumably the intention was to create a sonic mood to match the album's thematic concerns, but too often the execution leaves the songs sounding plodding and inert.

STUART MUNRO