



Dierks Bentley – Black Album Review



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The build-up to the release of Dierks Bentley’s eighth studio album (ninth if you count his 2001 release *Don’t Leave Me In Love*) has been quite a long one. Lead single *Somewhere on a Beach* was released back in January and has since topped the US Hot Country Songs and US Country Airplay Charts. Following the release of that single, several songs from *Black* have been released via digital retailers along with a series of videos to launch the project. Last month UK fans got to hear some of the new songs live when Dierks arrived on our shores for a short tour.

Black, in part named after his wife’s maiden name, is sonically a different proposition for Dierks. Over the course of the record he pushes the boundaries of Country music and his own comfort zone is put to the test. *Somewhere on a Beach* may not have seemed like much of a departure for the star but the other tracks have hinted at a bolder sound than we’ve heard from him previously. There are also collaborations with Maren Morris, Elle King and Trombone Shorty.

The album opens with the title track, which starts off with spares instrumentation allowing Dierks’ distinctive voice to be heard loud and clear. The song slowly

builds and it's an understated way for Dierks to ease you into the record. From that point on variety is the order of the day and those of you who have heard the songs released prior to the full album's arrival will have a good idea of what to expect.

I'll Be The Moon featuring Maren Morris is one of the darker songs on the record telling the tale of an affair. Dierks and Maren work well together and they harmonise beautifully on the sweeping chorus. When it comes to experimenting, no song is more different to Dierks' usual sound than the bluesy Mardi Gras featuring Trombone Shorty. Mardi Gras is used as a metaphor here but interestingly the song captures the kind of carnival vibe you'd expect from the parade.

Elsewhere on the record Dierks creates an anthem in the making with the soaring Freedom, marries sparse beats with hand claps on the stark Why Do I Feel, and throws back to a more traditional country rock beat with Roses and a Time Machine. Elle King features on the midtempo ballad Different for Girls, which has just been announced as the second single from the record. The song has an interesting lyrical slant with Dierks singing about how girls get judged by different standards than men.

One of my favourites on the record is What The Hell Did I Say?, which is a tale of regret following a night of heavy drinking. Dierks sings about having no clue what he said to a lover during a drunken phone call and you can't help but relate to him in an 'haven't we all been there' kind of way.

Black comes to a close with Can't Be Replaced, an acoustic-driven ballad that showcases Dierks' voice perfectly. It's the kind of song that he often comes back to but it's a sound that fits him down to the ground.

Black is a definite progression from Riser. In many ways it's very different from anything else that Dierks has done before and it's rewarding to listen to him exploring different sounds and ideas. As always Dierks' husky tone remains the focus of his songs but there's a lot of depth here that you'll pick up with repeated listens. It's safe to say that Black has definitely been worth the wait!