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Dierks Bentley delves into dark side of love in new album

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SIoux CITY | Dierks Bentley's title track "Black" really turns up the heat, burning hotter with love and longing than "Come a Little Closer," "Feel That Fire" and "Fiddlin' Around," combined.

The music video, brimming with unbridled passion, opens with a mysterious scene of a body on the floor, unmoving, alluding to a love triangle gone awry.

The soulful country star looks in the camera, closes his eyes and sings, "You know, my hands they know where to go, to find your fingertips/Trace them back to your lips, take you on a trip, flip that switch/Make my world go black, hit me like a heart attack, knock me flat on my back, yeah/Just keep doing that, that

thing you're doing there, brush me with your hair, I swear/I don't know how long that I can last."

Black happens to be his wife's maiden name, but Bentley also appreciates it's a powerful color that evokes mystery and intrigue. When the lights go down, the mind runs wild.

"I love songs that have layers and separate meanings, and this whole record is full of songs that mean something to me, but might not be totally clear to somebody else," Bentley said, calling from a "strange location," his house in Nashville.

He's not home very often, and he was about to hit the road again for his 40-city Somewhere on a Beach tour, which will stop at Sioux City's Tyson Events Center on June 24.

Fans are in luck. Bentley's riding on a high right now with his latest album ranking as the bestselling release in his 13-year career. Last week, he scored the No. 1 spot on Billboard's Top Albums Chart and Top Country Albums chart with "Black."

Partially inspired by watching the Showtime original series "The Affair," Bentley created "Black" as a concept album around relationships, which come with doubts, suspicions and self-sabotaging behaviors -- darker moments that quite often remain in the dark.

"I don't think there's anything exciting about happy love songs," he said. "I don't think they're really that honest, either."

Leading up to the album release date on May 27, Bentley built up energy and engagement around "Black" through a four-part music video series, rolled out on Rolling Stone Country two weeks at a time.

"After the album release date, all the newness is gone," he said. "Anybody can get it. This is something kind of fun for the hardcore fans to check out."

The series started with "I'll Be the Moon," which sets the scene with an affair, a woman torn between two men.

The storyline progresses with "What the Hell Did I Say," where the secret lover has too much to drink and leaves messages he can't remember.

"Pick Up" takes a turn for the worst when the woman's boyfriend gets hold of her phone and discovers she's been cheating. He turns violent.

The series wraps up with “Black,” the steamiest, lustiest song and music video of them all.

“It’s a little Skinemax-y there at the end,” Bentley said with a laugh. “It’s like ‘Game of Thrones.’”

When Bentley broke into the country music scene in 2003 with his first hit single “What Was I Thinkin,’” he never thought of producing online-only features for fans.

“It used to be, you’d release a single to radio. When it got to the top of the charts or as high as it’d go, you’d put the album out. You’d make some phone calls and do interviews, but you didn’t really do too much more than that,” he said.

While the industry changes with the wild web, what remains the same is his desire to make true albums.

“In my head, when I’m making this record, I’m picturing like a vinyl record,” he said. “I want it to be a complete body of work. And whether fans listen to the four-song video thing or if they buy a single or stream a song on YouTube and don’t buy it at all, that’s fine. But for me, at the end of the day, I need to have a vinyl copy of this record sitting in my house that I can be really proud of and know that it’s a complete story.”