

THE ARIZONA REPUBLIC

Monday, February 6, 2012

Q&A: Phoenix-native country star Dierks Bentley talks 'Home'

by Ed Masley

The Republic | azcentral.com

"Home" marks Dierks Bentley's return to mainstream country after going bluegrass on "Up on the Ridge." Here's what the Phoenix native said about the album and the title track.

Question: How does it feel to get back to the country mainstream a bit after diving into bluegrass on your previous release?

Answer: It feels great. I like big shows, a lot of volume and a lot of energy. I love electric instruments. But I do love mixing those with bluegrass instruments and cranking those up, too, with a little bit of that rock energy.

Q: What made you look to outside writers this time?

A: I write a lot of songs, but making "Up on the Ridge," I cut a Kris Kristofferson song. I cut a Verlon Thompson/Suzi Ragsdale song. I really found some great old songs. And some new songs, too. I've always listened to songs before but I don't think I've ever listened as intently as I did when I was making that album because we were bound and determined to find some great songs. And we did it right. So with this record, I wrote more songs that I had ever written for any album but I also listened to thousands of other people's songs. There are killer songs all over Nashville waiting to be discovered and I wanted to include that community on this album.

Q: Could you talk about the writing of the title track?

A: I was writing with Dan Wilson and Brett Beavers, thinking about Gabby Giffords because that had just happened four days earlier. And all the info-entertainers on the 24-hour news channels were constantly barking, trying to divide people. The politics were just so bad at that point. Dan said something about "America." Brett said something about "home." And I was like "This place is all called home. America."

We have so much more in common than we have differences. I travel the country more than any politician. I play small towns no one's ever heard of. I hang out with military families. I think I have my fingers on the pulse of this country pretty well, and what I hear on the news just doesn't seem like what I see in real life. So we captured it all in the song. And what I love about the song is that it's something anyone can relate to, and, hopefully, it helps somebody get through a tough time in their lives with the recession or having a family member in the military.

Q: Are you surprised that country radio has embraced the song?

A: Totally. Oh yeah. And I'm the biggest country fan there is, but I'm always a little cautious of a slower song or just a song with subject matter. ... This song is a little bit less of a chest-beating type of patriotic song. So yeah, I was definitely worried.

Q: It's complex.

A: It is. But Capitol Records, they wanted to make it a single, and I was like, "All right. We'll see how it works out."

Reach the reporter at ed.masley@arizona



Dierks Bentley