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PREVIEW: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2019/02/20/dierks-bentley-nashville-bridgestone-arena-jon-pardi-tenille-townes-burning-man-tour/2881954002/>

Dierks Bentley: From hip thrusts to hit songs, a ‘bigger hug’ of a show awaits



When Dierks Bentley hangs up the phone, he’s going to go clean out his closet. Bentley just finished listening to Marie Kondo’s popular book “The Life-Changing Magic of Tidying Up: The Japanese Art of Decluttering and Organizing” and he’s inspired.

“That’s what I’m most excited about right now,” Bentley said. “I’ve always been like minimalist, but I’m going even more hardcore.”

Bentley’s goal is to pare down to a couple of pairs of jeans and a handful of black T-shirts and white T-shirts.

“I’m pretty close to it,” he said. “It’s 100 percent rain in Nashville right now, and I’m digging in on that.”

Bentley will swap his domestic dad cape for his ‘90s country singer wig (and, later, his signature jeans and tee) this week when the father of three brings his “Burning Man” tour to Nashville’s Bridgestone Arena on Friday. Jon Pardi, Tenille Townes and Bentley’s ‘90s country cover band, Hot Country Knights, will open the show.

“I am having the time of my life out here (on tour)” Townes said. “I feel honored to have a front row seat to watch and learn from Dierks’ live show every night, and the welcoming culture of the road family that he’s created out here.”

If Townes is taking notes during Hot Country Knights, the takeaway is a bit different than that of Bentley's other performances.

Casual fans aren't likely to recognize the singer in the '90s country cover band, but Bentley said he'll be on stage in period-perfect clothes and an outlandish wig doing hip thrusts to songs including Sawyer Brown's "Some Girls Do."

"The Knights are really all about making you feel uncomfortable," Bentley said. "Knights is such a free feeling to get on stage in a full disguise. You can do whatever you want. Nobody knows. The majority of people there have no idea it's me on stage. I could take my wig off halfway through it, and they're not expecting and they won't get it."

Bentley said the Hot Country Knights' set is "so over the top" and that he "can't wait for people who haven't seen it in six months to see it."

The tour marks Bentley's second time headlining Bridgestone Arena and his first time playing the space in two years. At his inaugural pass-through in 2017, Bentley was fighting dry vocal cords and had a "hillbilly pharmacy" of cough drops, whiskey, tequila and hot tea behind him on stage to help him make it through the night. To make matters worse, he realized later that the condition was self-induced. The singer had recently gotten into doing cold-water plunges and a specific kind of breathing. Together, the pair spelled disaster for Bentley's voice, and for the first time in his career, he had to cancel his pre-show meet and greet. The concert didn't suffer because of it.



"I was just doing whatever I could to make it happen," Bentley said. "Sometimes when you're a little raw like that, it makes for a better performance because you're a little vulnerable. I'm looking forward to coming back this year in better shape, for sure. It's such a big deal for me to play that room. It's one of the big ones, if not the biggest."

Bentley takes the stage for the first time more than three hours before his headlining set. The singer begins his night about 6 p.m. with his bluegrass band, which plays for 40 minutes during a VIP event before the show. The VIP sets are typical at most country concerts, and Bentley said that, until he incorporated the bluegrass band, it was his least favorite part of the night. Now he said his kids often come up and sing and it's one of his most anticipated moments of the evening. He then trades his mandolin for his '90s country costume for a set before changing into his T-shirt and jeans to trigger his inner headliner.

Hearing people scream his name isn't in his daily headspace, Bentley said. When it happens sometimes it takes him a second to remember that he's the lead singer and frontman. He's dedicated to giving fans the best performance possible.



During the "Burning Man" tour, Bentley said that means mixing songs from his new album "The Mountain," including "Woman, Amen," "Living" and possibly "My Religion," into the set list.

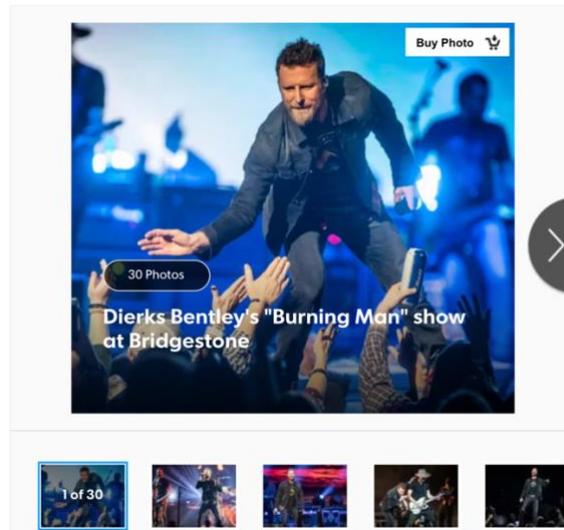
"I'm getting pretty good at finding a way to create a show where everyone gets what they want," he explained. "My main goal is to make sure that everybody who put their blood, sweat and tears into this day happening gets what they want. That's just a lot of energy transferred from me to them and them to me."

For people who come early and stay all night, Bentley said they get a glimpse of an even bigger picture.

"You got to watch the bluegrass, the Hot Country Knights, my entire show, to understand, to get the whole thing," he said. "I'm not going to go out on the first song and make you feel good. If you watch all three things, you're going to walk away with a much bigger hug. For the fans that come at 6:15 (p.m.) and stay till 11 (p.m.), it's a very wide-ranging show sonically and it gives them a lot to go home and think about."



REVIEW: <https://www.tennessean.com/story/entertainment/music/2019/02/23/dierks-bentleys-nashville-tour-stop-five-things-you-missed/2938972002/>



Dierks Bentley brings Keith Urban, Miranda Lambert, memorable night of hits to Bridgestone

[Dierks Bentley](#)'s debut country hit "What Was I Thinkin'" will turn 16 years old in 2019. Fans are still screaming the lyrics about a girl in a little white tank top. But after the singer's charismatic, high-energy headlining concert at Bridgestone Arena Friday night, it's clear Bentley always knew what he was thinking — that he was going to be one of country music's most endearing and enduring superstars.

Bentley's show ranged from '90s country hits and unexpected guest stars to sing-along chart-toppers, an expansive multimedia stage set and free-flowing gratitude that cascaded from Bentley onto everyone in his audience.

Five things you missed:

The performance

Bentley makes working an arena look effortless. He trucked in a massive screen for behind the stage and an intricate light rig, but his stage wasn't as elaborate as some of the multi-tiered, fire-breathing, castle-esque structures that often dominate the arena — and dwarf the singer. The result was Bentley carried the show with his songs, friends and familiar ease that makes fans feel like they're all good buddies.



He knows how to build a song list and how to move emotion through the room. Bentley kicked off the night with his most recent No. 1 “Burning Man,” flowed into his bluegrass staple “Up on the Ridge,” got the crowd rocking again with “Somewhere on a Beach” and then slowed down with his celebration of women “Woman, Amen.” During the song, photos of female country singers including Emmylou Harris, Shania Twain, Maren Morris, Loretta Lynn and Reba McEntire flashed across his big screen. Most songs had unique video content, but the most engaging use of Bentley’s video wall came during “Living.” Home videos of his family on vacation, his children in their school plays and the singer relaxing with friends filled the screen as a reminder that “somedays you’re just alive and some days you’re living.”

He isn’t afraid to hop into the crowd — he did it twice. Bentley left the mainstage to visit a satellite stage at the back of the floor seats during “Am I the Only One.” After he shot-gunned a beer, Bentley used the small stage for intimate performances of “Come a Little Closer” and “Say You Do.”

A kitschy, ‘70s-inspired mock video of Bentley’s pretend airline Dude Air set up “Drunk on a Plane.” And when he came out wearing aviator sunglasses and a captain’s hat — both askew — the crowd roared. He ran back through his fans again when he finished the show with “Free and Easy.”



Keith Urban and Miranda Lambert

Always generous with his spotlight, Bentley surprised fans with multiple unannounced guests Friday night.

“There’s a mountain in this town called Music Row and I’ve been trying to climb that mountain for years,” Bentley said. He explained the first time he played Bridgestone Arena was with Keith Urban and Kenny Chesney, and while he thought he had made it to the top of the mountain then, he still had a long way to go.

Bentley said, “This guy has made it all the way to the top — Entertainer of the Year.”

Urban walked out wearing an electric guitar strapped over a Dolly Parton t-shirt to sit in with Bentley’s band on “The Mountain.” Urban slid licks into pockets over the course of the song and then ended with screaming, feverish solo that dropped Bentley to his knees.

Bentley told fans that one of the things he loves about living in Nashville is that you never know who you’ll see. He said he and his wife were out for a walk and ran into “this singer and her husband.” He said he told her about the show and invited her to come out. She texted him Friday and said she’d be there.

When [Lambert](#) walked out, the crowd roared. Bentley said he had no idea what the three of them would sing but they quickly determined Hank Williams would be on the list.

“Not Junior or the third,” Bentley added. “But Hank.”

Their mini, stripped-down set included “Your Cheatin’ Heart” and “The Bottle Let Me Down.” Lambert and Urban shared the microphone for a longing, harmony-rich cover of Loretta Lynn’s “Blue Kentucky Girl,” and Bentley jumped in for The Dixie Chick’s “Cowboy Take Me Away.”

“I like it when boys sing that song,” Lambert told the crowd as they cheered.

The unexpected trio looped back around to finish their performance where it started – “Your Cheatin’ Heart.”

Meet Evie

Bentley has been bringing his oldest daughter Evalyn, 10, on stage in Nashville to sing with him since she was a toddler. But Evie doesn’t have the voice of a baby anymore. The pair sang “Travelin’ Light” from his current album “The Mountain,” and his little girl’s strong and textured voice rang through the arena with the confidence of someone twice her age. But she also adorably acted her age. Early in the song and again at the end, Evie did “the floss” dance. Bentley seemed surprised the first time. The second, joking, he told her to “take your flossing and go to bed.” It was about 10:30 p.m. at the time.



The opening acts

Bentley promised crazy disguises, hip thrusts and ‘90s country hits from his opening band Hot Country Knights. He delivered all those things topped with a mullet wig and two special guests. Fellow country star Thomas Rhett matched Bentley dated button-down shirt for dated button-down shirt. He surprised fans and showed up to sing his dad — Rhett Akins’ hit — “That Ain’t My Truck.” Bentley said he’d been closing Hot Country Knights sets with Sawyer Brown hit “Some Girls Do” and in Nashville, the country group’s lead singer Mark Miller came out to sing it.

Country music’s new it girl Tenille Townes has one of the most distinct voices in country music — and Bentley quips that he’s fortunate that she likes his voice, too, and agreed to come on tour with him. In addition to her set early in the evening, Bentley brought her out during his headlining show to cover Elle King’s part in his hit “Different for Girls.”



“Tenille Townes makes me look cool,” Bentley said. “I love her singing and she’s such a source of great energy.”

Jon Pardi is a long, tall country Californian with songs and stage moves to match. The man isn’t opposed to striking a pose. The crowd raucously sang along to every word of Pardi’s hits including “Heartache on the Dance Floor,” “Head Over Boots” and “Dirt on My Boots.”