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BROOKS & DUNN LIGHT UP FASTER HORSES IN LONG-AWAITED MICHIGAN RETURN

BROOKLYN — On a weekend packed with young performers and contemporary hits, it was a heritage act that brought the Faster Horses festival to a crescendo Saturday.

Brooks & Dunn, playing Michigan for the first time in eight years, closed out the boozy country fest's second day with a set of seasoned hits on the grounds of Michigan International Speedway.

Landing the most successful duo in country music history was a real coup for Faster Horses and its producer, Live Nation's Brian O'Connell: Since reuniting in 2015 after a five-year split, Brooks & Dunn have played just a handful of dates outside their ongoing Las Vegas run with Reba McEntire.

Saturday's show was their first here since July 2010 at DTE Energy Music Theatre, and came as Faster Horses marked its sixth year as Michigan's most popular country fest and one of the biggest in the nation. Attendance figures won't be released until Monday, but crowds appeared on par with the 40,000-plus of recent editions.



 **Faster Horses Festival** ✓
@faster_horses

We got our boot scootin' boogie on with Brooks & Dunn! What an unbelievable night 2 of #fasterhorses. We can't wait to do it all over again tomorrow. 🎵🇺🇸

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“We don’t get off the couch much,” Kix Brooks said early in the set, surveying the sea of fans in front of him. “This is fun.”

If the 60something Brooks and Ronnie Dunn were old hands by Faster Horses standards, their 90-minute set — full of guitars, pop hooks and commercial polish — drove home how their work helped set the stage for today’s hit country sound. Still, on a day that had been dotted with electronic beats and rock-star swagger, there was something downright traditional about the performance, with its cowboy hats and touches of twang pointing to country music’s not-so-distant past.

The sun was setting and plenty of beer-blasted fans were stumbling by the time the duo got set to take the stage late Saturday. The big smashes rolled one after another: “Brand New Man,” “Red Dirt Road,” “Mama Don’t Get Dressed Up for Nothing.” The pedal-steel whine of “Neon Moon” lent a wistful touch, “Cowgirls Don’t Cry” had couples swaying, and “Believe” brought its gospel-inflected solemnity.

Endurance wasn’t for everyone: A slower midsection of ballads and mid-tempo numbers had a steady stream of young fans heading for the campgrounds. Brooks & Dunn eventually ramped up the pace, ultimately making their way to the monster hits “Boot Scootin’ Boogie” and “My Maria.”

A day with no shortage of American flags and “U.S.A.!” chants was capped by a burst of red-white-and-blue confetti and streamers as the duo topped off with 2001’s “Only in America.”

Faster Horses — a “redneck rave” as one T-shirt slogan put it — had been in customary hard-partying mode throughout the day. It was a scene of Budweiser-hoisting fans, Mardi Gras beads, the occasional twerking girl and a prominent Trump banner in the thick of the crowd. Kid Rock songs were regular selections as Dee Jay Silver spun tunes between band sets.

Ten months after the shooting massacre at Las Vegas’ Route 91 Harvest fest — produced by this same Live Nation country crew — security was notably more conspicuous at Faster Horses. That included searches of every vehicle entering the site, including those of staffers and crews.

In another first, the event is being aired live on the SiriusXM country station the Highway (channel 56).



Following a Saturday opening set by Walker Hayes, Locash took the main stage for a party-priming performance of heavy guitars and drinking anthems. The duo's big hits ("I Love This Life," "I Know Somebody") were joined by the road-testing of new numbers, including the Florida Georgia Line-soundalike "Feels Like a Party" and the military tribute "Brothers."

Billy Currington played a crowd-pleasing set lined with big radio hits ("People Are Crazy," "That's How Country Boys Roll," "Good Directions") and sing-along covers like Hank Williams Jr.'s "Family Tradition" and Walk the Moon's "Shut Up and Dance."

Across the way in the Next From Nashville tent — mostly devoted to up-and-comers — songwriters Lee Thomas Miller, the Warren Brothers and Grosse Pointe-bred J.T. Harding broke down the hits they've penned for the likes of Tim McGraw, Taylor Swift and Uncle Kracker.

But Saturday's real show-stealer was a Faster Horses rookie: Chris Janson served up whiskey-soaked country-rock to go with high-energy rock showmanship — albeit the sort that comes with a bright red Bass Pro Shops cap. Janson had Faster Horses' early-evening crowd in his hands as he romped through "Redneck Life" and "Fix a Drink," and got no complaints as he reprised two numbers performed earlier by Locash: "I Love this Life" and "Truck Yeah," both cowritten with the duo.



Faster Horses Festival ✓
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This! #partyofthesummer #chrisjanson

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Gray skies loomed for much of the day, but the rain largely held out as fans piled onto the main site from their campgrounds around MIS. (A severe-weather alert Friday evening had prompted a precautionary evacuation of the fest grounds.)

Faster Horses will wrap up Sunday with a headlining set by Florida Georgia Line.