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Hot Country Knights, Nashville's self-proclaimed 'true Kings of Neon,' ready debut album



Heroes get remembered, but the legend of Hot Country Knights never dies.

Ask Nashville singer and unofficial Knights historian Dierks Bentley and he'll say this goofball ode to 1990s country music began in rural Moose Knuckle, Tennessee (nope, it's not a real place) and they've been marinating (literally, Bentley said the band lives in a van in his front yard) for three decades at the chance for a major label album release.

And next Friday, despite their musical taste entering a cryogenic freezer two decades ago, Hot Country Knights release "The K is Silent" via Capitol Records Nashville.

"The album was gonna be called 'Kings of Neon,' but then Brooks & Dunn went ahead and named their Hall of Fame exhibition 'Kings of Neon,' " said Bentley, who produced the Knights' debut record. "Everyone knows the Hot Country Knights are the true 'Kings of Neon,' you can ask Kix and Ronnie that."

He continued, "For a lot of people out there who hadn't heard Hot Country Knights, well, everyone in Nashville has. It was like when no one had heard Chris Stapleton — the general public — but everyone back in Nashville knew who he was. It's the exact same thing with Hot Country Knights. ... So, for folks out there, just think: 'Chris Stapleton? Hot Country Knights? Same thing.' "



OK, OK. So Hot Country Knights aren't actually an outlandishly dressed country band left over from the 1990s. Bentley — who fronts the band as his alter ego, Douglas "Doug" Douglason — launched the spoof project with his touring band about a half-decade ago. Bentley would open his headlining arena shows with a faux mullet and a half-hour of fiddle and steel guitar '90s country tunes.

With "The K is Silent," the band reaches what it would call "all lower 48 states," Bentley jested. Songs include the self-explanatory "Hot Country Knights," goober-y pensive "Mull it Over," chaotically patriotic "The USA Begins With Us" and, of course, "Kings of Neon."

"It's something that the band and I had been working on for like six years ... a lot of people around us, including my manager, were like, 'Please stop. you guys can't do this,' " Bentley said. "It just kept headed that direction, and my manager Mary Hilliard Harrington said, 'If I can't beat 'em, I'll join 'em.' It's been so much fun."



It helps when listeners and noisemaking counterparts still want to spin neon-soaked '90s tunes. Bentley called on Grand Ole Opry members and 1990s hit-makers Travis Tritt and Terri Clark as featured artists on the LP.

And, according to the Knights, having a mullet helps with the '90s spirit, too.

"Blake Shelton, he's growing his mullet out again, I saw on the news," Bentley teased. "Everybody knows that the Hot Country Knights actually trademarked the mullet. They own it."

It's just a shame they were such a nightmare to work with in the studio and "probably for the best" that COVID-19 precautions paused the band's spring club tour, Bentley joked.

"Sometimes (at the studio), Doug gets dropped off by a police car, and they picked him up on the way out," Bentley said. "A lot of fights. A lot of inappropriate behavior. But at the end of the day I was able to get some great music out of these guys."

