

MusicNotes

Dierks Bentley

With a Name Like That, He Has To Be Good

Words and Photos: Amy Edgerly

True, with a name like Dierks, there's bound to be a struggle just walking the earth. Pronunciation mishaps are inevitable, even when unintentional, but the name Dierks Bentley just begs a little horseplay as well.

Bentley says "I've been called everything you can possibly imagine except Dierks; it's a hard name to get right. I've probably had it happen onstage before, 'Welcome Kirks Dentley and Firks Fentley.. Jerks Gently...'" With adversity comes strength and character, and this country music artist personifies plenty of both.

This should come as no surprise; this country star is a biker. He's not just a fair weather celebrity biker either. As he travels the country playing on the Kenny Chesney sold-out record-breaking tour and headlining his own concerts, his Harley-Davidson is his dutiful travel companion.



"I carry my bike out there on the road and ride it all over the country wherever we go. We pull into a different venue in a different state, I get the bike out and I go ride around."

And why wouldn't he? He worked long and hard to achieve his proud purchase. He first owned a 1981 CX-500 Honda for six years that he paid \$700 for and sold for \$800. Those Hondas retain their investment, sure, but he says, "I always wanted a Harley, and when I finally made the money in the music business I bought a 100 year anniversary 2003 Softtail. It's a great bike. I don't have to worry about it falling apart on me [while] going down the road at 80 mph."

He loves that Harley, but Dierks also muses, "Hopefully in the next couple of years things will slow down and I can look into different bikes. Being a guy, I'd like looking at a little more of a chopper type of motorcycle, but I sure have enjoyed the Harley a bunch."

One recent stop Dierks and his Softtail made was at Ford Park Pavilion in Beaumont, Texas for the "DudeBrahBrew Music Festival" held in July. Dierks headlined the shindig, sharing the stage with Texas icons Kevin Fowler and the Randy Rogers Band, as well as some of those "boys from Oklahoma" Stoney LaRue and the band No Justice. What bona-fide beer drinkin', hell-raisin' redneck could ask for a better lineup?

Though Dierks Bentley has undeniably made it into "the show", he cut his chops on the road with these guys and others like them and has



the deepest respect for their talent and creativity.

When talking about Fowler and Rogers, he says, "Kevin is just The Dancehall Doctor. He comes in and just turns any place into a dancehall. And Randy just - every time I see them they get more tight as a band, have great songs and they've got a really cool thing going on. I'm touring with Randy all fall."

Speaking of fall *Breaking News* fellow Texans: the annual Fall Fandango at Cynthia Woods Mitchell Pavilion in The Woodlands, traditionally hosted and headlined by Pat Green, will this year have its torch passed on to Bentley. From the horse's mouth on the topic: "I'm headlining the Fall Fandango this year. Pat Green passed it along. I'm a little nervous about it, but we'll do our best." That concert is October 1, 2006.

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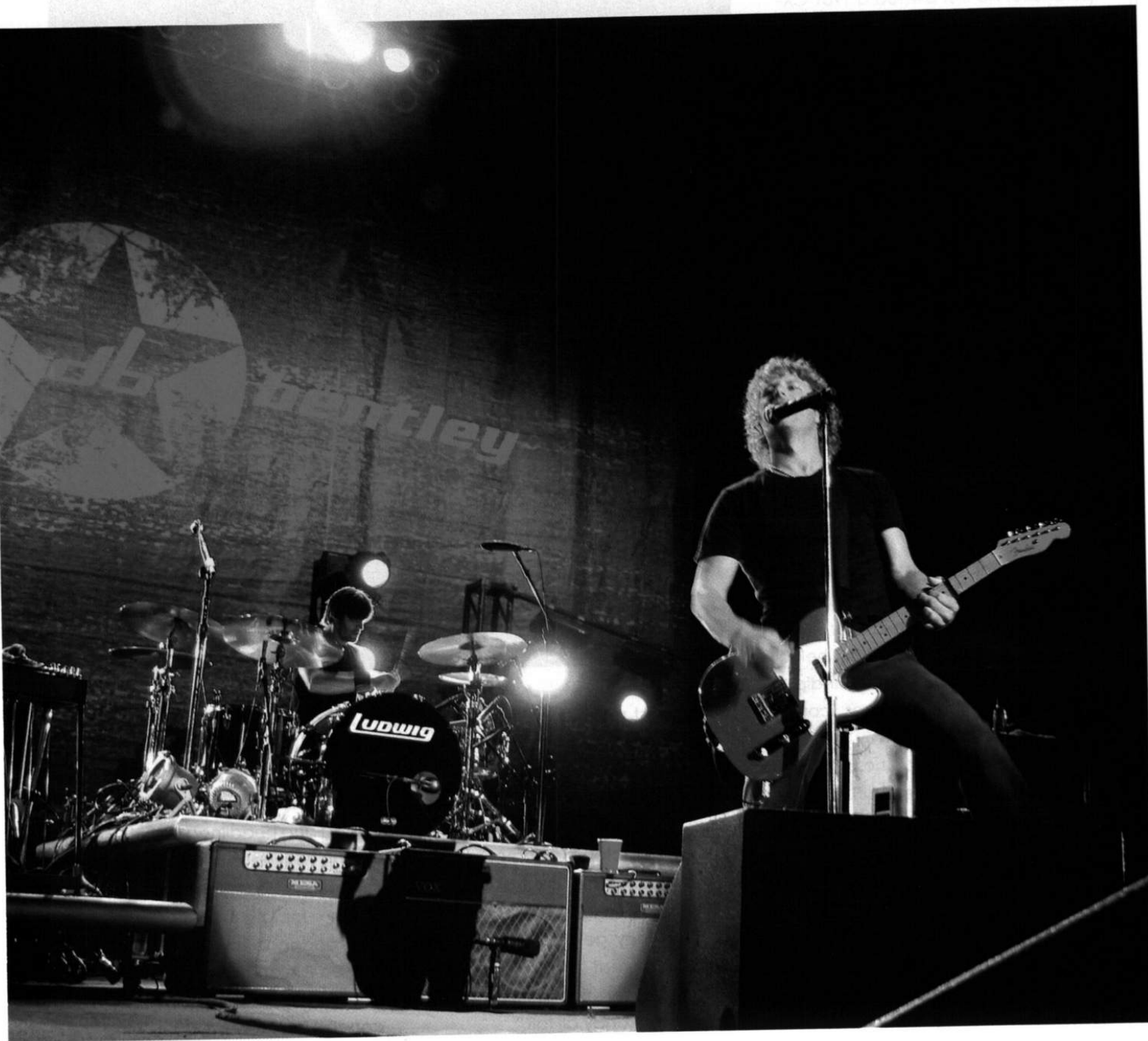
Not planning on being in the Houston area in October? Then you might want to plan a trip to Nashville for a very important, groundbreaking charity ride to be hosted by Dierks and a few of his closest friends.

Motorcycles: On The Road Again readers are cordially invited to at-

tend the First Annual Dierks' Ride For Kids on Sunday, October 8, 2006. The ride will begin mid-afternoon at the Cool Springs Harley-Davidson dealership in Franklin, Tennessee and end at the Old Tennessee Fairgrounds in Nashville with a concert event starring Dierks himself. Other

artists devoting their time and talent to the event include Miranda Lambert, Montgomery Gentry (also taking part in the ride) and Jeff Foxworthy, who will perform an hour of his trademark redneck standup.

Dierks guarantees a great time at



the event. "I think a lot of people will be coming out just to see the concert, but it will be fun to enter the fairgrounds on the bikes and all the people who sign up for the bike ride will be getting the VIP treatment and it's going to be a cool thing. This is our first attempt to do it and so we're calling on everybody we know to help us out."

The ride and concert event will benefit the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital in Nashville. This is Bentley's first foray into the realm of charity ride organization and hosting, and though he is anxious about pulling it off, he is also deeply committed to its success and to helping the amazing staff at Vanderbilt and the beautiful children they care for and serve. Dierks told us how he feels about Vanderbilt and its patients:

"My manager, Scott Kernahan and I came up with the idea with the birth of his last son. He spent some time with the folks there at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital and the staff there amazed him. I actually befriended a boy at Vanderbilt Children's Hospital named Connor who ended up passing away from cancer. If anyone's ever spent any time in the hospital -- the Vanderbilt Children's Hospital -- it's amazing. It's a new facility that when you go in there it just doesn't feel like a hospital. They really work hard to present a vibe just of fun and they lighten up the situation a little bit because there are a lot of needy kids in there. The ride is just a way to help some other folks that can't afford the services to get in there and use this hospital. This is right down the street

from my house and it's a wonderful hospital."

He continues speaking of his community: "There's so many great people in country music that are willing to get involved, want to get involved, want to give back to this community in particular, Nashville, which is where we all live. So we thought we'd throw our hat in the ring and give it a shot and see if we

can't start something." Spoken like a true biker.

With the help of Kernahan and his new wife Cassidy, Bentley hopes to bring the two facets of his lifestyle, music and motorcycles, together to help make life not only better, but bearable and even enjoyable for children and their families who need it most.

Do country music and motor-





cycles really make a good combination? Bentley thinks so. "To me, riding bikes with other people is all about that family of being out on the road again, and going through that experience together.

"But if you see someone else that rides a motorcycle, you have something in common with them right away whether you know them or not. Because they get it, they know what it's all about. They know it's about getting out there on the open road. There's a whole ethos that goes along with riding bikes, a certain mentality, a certain sense of community and unwritten rules of conduct.

"People who ride bikes treat each other right. It's the same way with country music. If I talk to someone and find out that they are country music fans, I know that they get what I get and there's again a certain camaraderie that goes along with that. And another reason, which isn't too far from being obvious, motorcycles and country music - that whole modern day horse, kind of free and easy way of living and just being out there on the road.

"We travel all over the country and we live on the road basically and that fits in there pretty good with what people that love to ride do. It's a great kind of partnership."

Dierks Bentley, purveyor of number one country hits and a happy Harley rider is a man who respects in others qualities like freedom, openness, generosity, accountability and trueness of spirit. He's currently re-

cording a new album that will be titled *Long Trip Alone*.

While it might accurately be said that Dierks Bentley's career will entail a long trip ahead, with his biker mentality and spirit, there is no way he'll be making it alone.

When I asked Dierks whose life he would most like to emulate, he told me, "Being a Christian I guess I'd like, well I try to model my life after Christ, but that's the ultimate goal I guess." There is a popular school of thought

(or perhaps it's my own theory and opinion) that if Jesus walked the earth today, He'd be a biker or at least hang out with them a lot.

I'm sure He would (and does) enjoy hanging out with the country crooner biker with the funny name, and count the guy among His own family of cherished friends.

For more information about Dierks, a schedule of his show dates or his First Annual Ride For Kids, visit his website at www.dierks.com.

