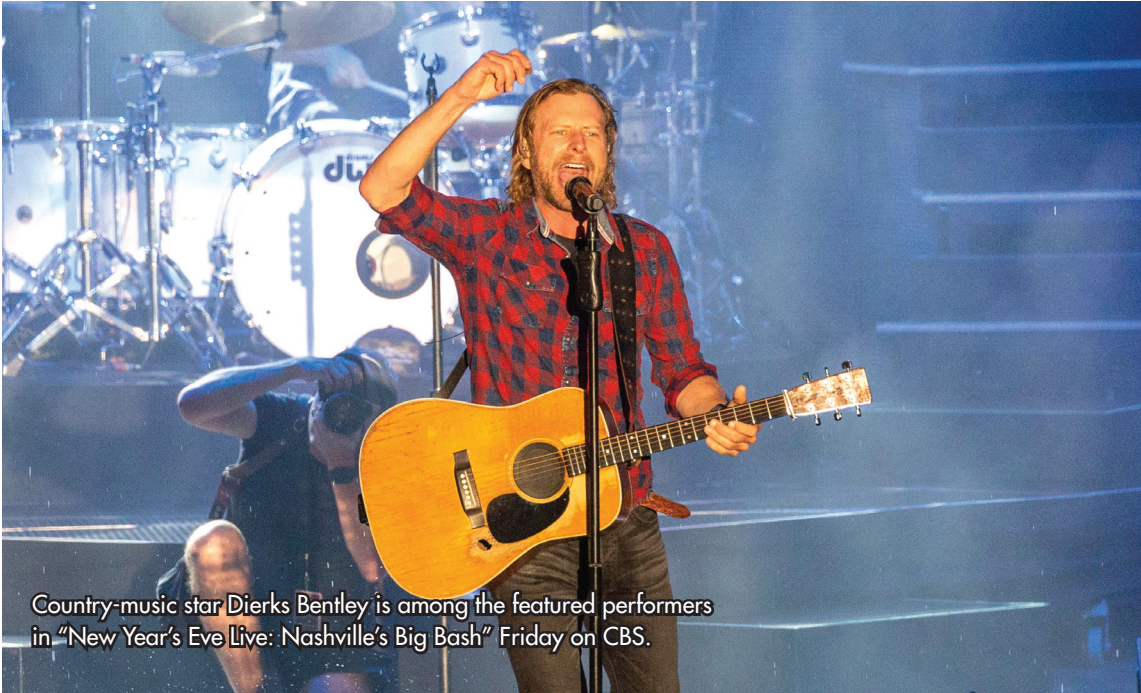


# coverstory

BY JAY BOBBIN



Country-music star Dierks Bentley is among the featured performers in "New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash" Friday on CBS.

Dierks Bentley typically spends New Year's Eve on a holiday skiing vacation, but not this time.

Along with many other country-music stars, he'll help CBS get back in the Dec. 31 special-programming game – something the network largely has been out of since its years of featuring bandleader Guy Lombardo and the Royal Canadians. Starting in primetime schedule and resuming after late local news on Friday, Dec. 31, "New Year's Eve Live: Nashville's Big Bash" will present Bentley, Zac Brown Band and Dan + Shay as headliners at the title city's Bicentennial Capitol Mall State Park. Bobby Bones and "Entertainment Tonight's" Rachel Smith will serve as hosts.

"I have a vested interest in this town and in country music, and this spotlight is a big deal for us," the friendly Bentley says. "I love watching the New Year's Eve shows with my kids and seeing the ball drop, but it just seems like it's not what it used to be. It's also really cold in New York, and it's not that it's not fun doing those shows, but there should be one from Nashville. People love country music, so it's about time we have a show coming out of here."

Bentley will have plenty of peers on hand for nearly 50 performances from various Music City venues, and the roster also includes Jason Aldean, Jimmie Allen, Kelsea

Ballerini, Gabby Barrett, Brooks & Dunn, Luke Bryan, Elle King, Miranda Lambert, Darius Rucker, Blake Shelton and Cole Swindell. Holding to Nashville tradition, the drop of a "music note" will prompt fireworks at midnight Central time; the new year's East Coast arrival also will be marked.

"I've been touring this year," Bentley reports (though some of his shows were canceled due to COVID-19 protocols), "and with what's happening with audiences out on the road, there's this celebratory feeling and a sense of relief. People are congregating and singing at the top of their lungs, and putting a period on 2021 and hoping for better things in 2022 is going to be a big theme in downtown Nashville. It'll be a much-needed party, that's for sure."

The pandemic has given Bentley – who's won multiple awards from the Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music – more time than he expected to work on his forthcoming 10th studio album. He already has released its singles "Gone" and "Beers on Me," both of which he expects to perform on the New Year's Eve special.

"You play every show like it's the last one, and you celebrate it like it's the last one," Bentley reasons of the current times. "Wrapping that feeling into a New Year's Eve show, it's going to be incredible."

## Dierks Bentley helps Nashville bring the new year to CBS

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