

A Letter to His Son

BY ALANNA HORNER

In January 2007, a very pregnant Kimberly Williams-Paisley was asked to write an excerpt for a book titled *What I Know Now: Letters to My Younger Self*. As she began writing her letter, Kimberly's husband, Brad Paisley, thought that was an interesting idea for a song. "I started thinking about that and I thought, 'What would I say to myself in high school?'" he remembers.

As he reflected back on his high school years, Brad knew exactly the year he wanted to go back to. "I picked 17 years old based on the fact that 16 is your sophomore year and you're pretty

awkward, but still young enough into high school where it's just a matter of getting to know who you are," he explains.

"When you're 17, you want to be 18. You're not technically an adult yet. It's just a really tough age for most kids."

Unlike most of his successful songs in the past, "Letter to Me" took Brad almost a week to complete, because the lyrics kept changing. "Every day was a different letter," says Brad. "It had other lines that didn't make the song because it is a song, and it's not like an actual letter, which would be three, four, or five pages long. There were so many things I wanted to say—I didn't want to lose the line about *I wish you'd study Spanish* because that is one thing I'd change.

"There's a line in the song that says *And you should really thank Mrs. Brinkman*. She was and still is the speech teacher at John Marshall High School in Glen Dale, West Virginia," says Brad. "She told me, 'You have to take this class. When you get up with a guitar you're fine, but you need to know how to talk in any situation to a group of people if you really want to do this for a living.' It was a pivotal time in my life."

Although his son, William Huckleberry Paisley, was not yet born when the song was written, Brad says "Letter to Me" is a song on his *5th Gear* album where Will's influence is most apparent. "As I wrote it, I saw a second chance emerging in the song, and the second chance is epitomized in the fact that I have a son now. When I wrote it, I didn't know if we were going to have a boy or a girl. Maybe deep down I knew all along."

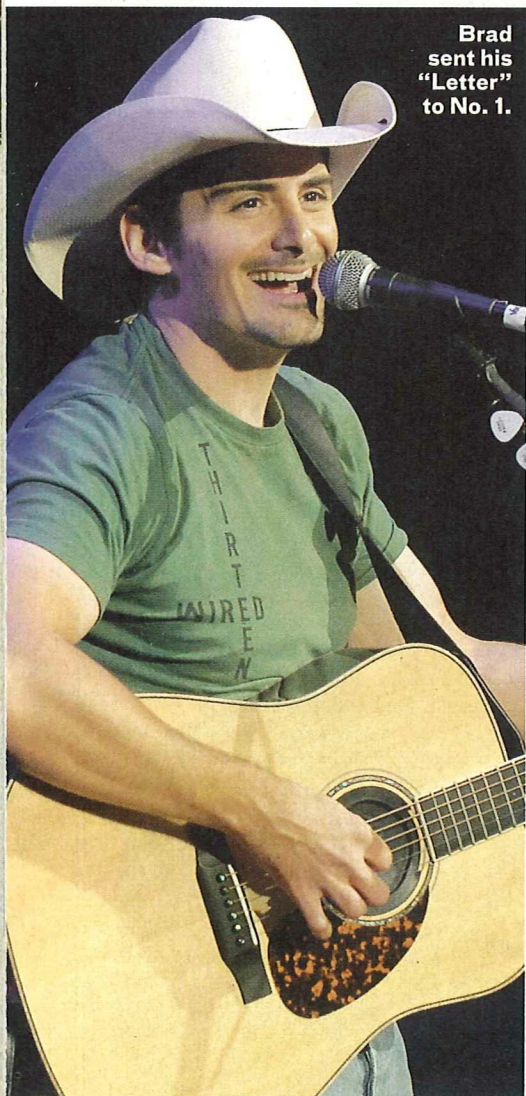
"Letter to Me" was released as the album's third single and became Brad's sixth consecutive No. 1 hit.

"When I look back," Brad notes, "I realize the letter, in summation, says, 'Have some faith—it'll be fine.'"

"Writing this song has been one of the most rewarding experiences I have ever had."



Brad Paisley



Brad sent his "Letter" to No. 1.

"Letter to Me"

WRITTEN AND PERFORMED BY
Brad Paisley

If I could write a letter to me
And send it back in time to myself at 17
First I'd prove it's me by saying
look under your bed
There's a Skoal can and a *Playboy* no one
else would know you hid
And then I'd say I know it's tough
When you break up after seven months
And yeah I know you really liked her and
it just don't seem fair
All I can say is pain like that is fast
and it's rare

And oh you got so much going for you,
going right
But I know at 17 it's hard to see past
Friday night
She wasn't right for you
And still you feel like there's a knife sticking
out of your back
And you're wondering if you'll survive
You'll make it through this and you'll see
You're still around to write this letter to me

At the stop sign at Tomlinson and Eighth
Always stop completely
Don't just tap your brakes
And when you get a date with Bridget
Make sure the tank is full
On second thought, forget it
That one turns out kinda cool
Each and every time you have a fight
Just assume you're wrong and Dad is right
And you should really thank Mrs. Brinkman
She spent so much extra time
It's like she sees the diamond underneath
And she's polishing you 'til you shine

And oh you got so much going for you,
going right
But I know at 17 it's hard to see past
Friday night
Tonight's the bonfire rally
But you're staying home instead
Because if you fail algebra
Mom and Dad'll kill you dead
Trust me, you'll squeak by and get a C
And you're still around to write this letter
to me

You've got so much up ahead
You'll make new friends
And you should see your kids and wife
And I'd end by saying have no fear
These are nowhere near the best years
of your life

I guess I'll see you in the mirror
When you're a grown man
P.S. go hug Aunt Rita every chance you can

And oh you got so much going for you,
going right
But I know at 17 it's hard to see past
Friday night
I wish you'd study Spanish
I wish you'd take a typing class
I wish you wouldn't worry, let it be
I'd say have a little faith and you'll see

If I could write a letter to me
To me

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