

Brad Paisley

Country Musician

Born Oct. 28, 1972, in the tiny Ohio River town of Glen Dale, W.Va., Brad Paisley seemed destined for a life of music. When Paisley was 8, his grandfather gave him his first guitar -- a Sears Danelectro Silvertone with an amp in the case. By the age of 10, Paisley was playing well enough to accompany himself. He soon began singing in church and at civic meetings for the Lion's Club and the Fraternal Order of Elks. Next, he formed his first band, Brad Paisley & the C-Notes, with his guitar instructor, local musician Clarence "Hank" Goddard. At 12, Paisley wrote his first song, "Born on Christmas Day." His junior high school principal heard it and asked him to do it at the next Rotary Club meeting. In the audience that day was Tom Miller, program director for WWVA, Wheeling's country radio powerhouse.

Miller was so impressed by the performance that he invited Paisley to make a guest appearance on Jamboree USA, the station's legendary Saturday night show. Paisley was ecstatic, and his performance went over so well that he was asked to become a Jamboree regular. During his eight years on the show, he opened for such country luminaries -- and personal favorites -- as Roy Clark, Jack Greene and Little Jimmy Dickens. Paisley's Jamboree membership also earned him the opportunity to perform each year at the mammoth outdoor summer festival, Jamboree in the Hills. The event routinely boasted dozens of top country acts and drew crowds of 60,000 or more. But the weekly Jamboree turned out to be Paisley's most valuable training ground. On the weekends he didn't perform there, he would hang out backstage, soaking up tips from veteran performers like George Jones.

After high school, Paisley began his studies at nearby West Liberty College. But his college advisor, Jim Watson -- noting what he'd done and what he still wanted to do -- kept urging him to move to Nashville and enroll in the Belmont University music business program. Initially, Paisley resisted, preferring instead to remain close to home with his "serious girlfriend" and his college and musical buddies. But when he came to Nashville to attend a friend's wedding, he stayed on long enough to check out Belmont. Excited by what he saw there, he decided to transfer. At Belmont, Paisley met Frank Rogers, a fellow student who now serves as his producer; Kelley Lovelace, a frequent songwriting partner; and many of the musicians who would later work in his band and play on his first album. Paisley served his college internship at ASCAP, the performing rights association. There he met Chris DuBois, another of his co-writers. His friends at ASCAP were sufficiently impressed by the songs Paisley was writing and set up an appointment with the talent scouts at EMI Music Publishing. A week after graduation, Paisley signed a songwriting deal with the company.

Like many up-and-coming artists in Nashville, Paisley earned extra money by singing and playing on demos. One of these attracted the attention of Arista Nashville's A&R Department. After a series of meetings and phone calls -- during which each party proclaimed its affection and esteem for the other -- Paisley added his name to the Arista roster.

The newcomer made his mark in 1999 with the single "He Didn't Have to Be," co-written with friend Lovelace. The song, which detailed the story of Lovelace's real-life relationship with his stepson, gave Paisley his first No. 1 single and helped his debut album *Who Needs Pictures* go platinum. In 2000, Paisley won the Country Music Association's Horizon Award and the Academy of Country Music's best new male vocalist trophy and received his first Grammy nomination in 2001 in the all-genre best new artist category. He made his Grand Ole Opry debut May 28, 1999, and after 40 some appearances, he was inducted into the Opry on Feb. 17, 2001.

In 2002, he released his follow-up album *Part II*. According to Paisley, *Part II* picks up right where *Who Needs Pictures* left off, literally. "The fiddle that fades out at the end of the first record leads you into the first song on *Part II*," he says. "I pictured someone putting them in the CD player and playing them back to back." The album garnered his third No. 1 hit with the hilarious "I'm Gonna Miss Her (The Fishing Song)." His third album, *Mud on the Tires*, arrived in 2003. It featured the hit "Celebrity," which poked fun at fame and reality television.

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