

Biography

Brad Paisley *Mud on the Tires*

“It’s the little imperfections, it’s the sudden change in plans...I live for little moments like that.”

With those lines from “Little Moments,” Brad Paisley may offer the perfect summation of *Mud on the Tires*. An unexpected turn, a change of direction, a surprise, even a laugh—all played out against a musical backdrop that’s laced through-and-through with Brad’s seamless guitar work and creative vision.

His touch is everywhere—he wrote or co-wrote nine of the album’s 16 tracks (17 if you count the “hidden” one at the end), infusing those songs with moments and scenes drawn from his own life, and once again sharing his wit and humor along the way. “My favorite line in the [title] song is, ‘It’s in the middle of nowhere...only one way to get there...gotta get a little mud on the tires.’” And to bring *Mud on the Tires* to fruition, that’s exactly what Brad does.

For the album’s lead single, Brad found inspiration as close as his TV. The result is “Celebrity,” a tongue-in-cheek take on pop culture and every American’s apparent desire for the 15 minutes of fame promised by Andy Warhol. “It used to be people were famous for being incredible at things, and now, they’re just famous,” Brad notes.

“Celebrity in general is one of those things that’s easy to make fun of,” he adds. “Extravagant lifestyles, huge cars, houses—they lose touch with who they really are, and *we* lose touch with who they really are.” To illustrate his point, Brad created a video that became an immediate fan favorite, thanks in part to self-deprecating cameos by William Shatner, *Seinfeld*’s Jason Alexander, and Trista Rehn (*The Bachelorette*).

While reality TV may have provided the springboard, there’s a deeper inspiration behind “Celebrity,” with a line of thought that also fuels “The Best Thing That I Had Goin’.” Sometimes the American Dream gets sidetracked, and the pursuit of financial reward takes precedent over other things that really matter. With “Ain’t Nothin’ Like,” Brad offers a window into his own values. “It’s a reflection of what I long for,” he admits with a laugh.

Snapshots of everyday life, and life lived with a smile. There’s an abundance to be found here. “Mud on the Tires” is filled with a spirit of free-wheeling, grab-your-girl-and-go exuberance. “That’s Love” offers an entertaining take on the realities of a working relationship, while the ballad “Somebody Knows You Now” conveys the honesty of a relationship that failed.

Then there’s “Little Moments.” “My favorite saying is, ‘If you’re going to laugh about it later, you might as well start now.’” And that’s exactly what Brad does, borrowing an incident or two from his own life, including the first time he heard his wife (actress Kimberly Williams-Paisley) curse, a drive they took that left them “lost but holdin’ hands.” “I think the most fun about life in general and being with somebody is the things you go through together, the things you laugh about later.”

Smiles and laughter are important to Brad. “That’s where I try to be a little different than some. It’s really important to me that I entertain people. And that comes down to being willing to go out on a limb...and be funny.” So there he is, poking a little fun at notoriety again in “Famous People”; telling a joke from start to finish in the concert favorite, “The Cigar Song” (“It might be an urban legend, but I think it’s true.”); setting the stage for a cartoon from the Old West in “Spaghetti Western Swing,” an instrumental featuring a “narrative” by Bill Anderson, Little Jimmy Dickens and George Jones and a “dual” of sorts between Brad and veteran guitarist Redd Volkaert (from Merle Haggard’s band). But *Mud on the Tires* isn’t all fun and games. Even when he is having fun, as evidenced while picking an electric guitar in “Make a Mistake” or jamming with his band on the next track, the instrumental counterpart, “Make a Mistake with Me,” it’s clear that this is the work of a serious musician. You can see the grin on Brad’s face that sets the stage for the jam...watch it broaden as each musician is showcased in a solo...and see it open into a smile when the melody winds its way down a path somewhere between a jazz club and a Texas honky-tonk.

The same musicians who surround Brad night after night on stages coast-to-coast bring that same dynamic energy and precision to *Mud on the Tires*. “It’s important to me—these guys are my sound.” And Brad himself plays guitar (in some cases, more than one) on every track. “This album is a little different than the other records, even in that sense. Musically, we took a lot of chances on it.” Brad’s instruments here range from acoustic, electric, baritone and 12-string guitar to bass and mandolin.

And then there’s his voice. Brad will tell you he simply sings to bridge the gap between guitar solos, but that’s hardly the case. “Is It Raining at Your House” finds Brad covering a song that was originally a Top 10 hit for Vern Gosdin, a veteran singer known in Nashville as “The Voice.” Noting that a lot of younger fans to country music may never have gotten to hear Gosdin’s 1990 favorite, it seemed natural to introduce a great song to a new generation of listeners who just might be inspired to discover more of Gosdin’s music. “So,” Brad reasoned, “everybody wins.”

The album takes a somber turn with “Whiskey Lullaby.” Penned by Bill Anderson and Jon Randall, it’s a stark but powerful tale. “This song has a lot of things going against it...the word ‘whiskey’ in the title...[and] it deals with suicide,” Brad admits. “But it’s no darker than ‘He Stopped Loving Her Today.’ I think they penned a masterpiece,” he continues, and “that opening line – ‘She put him out like the burning end of a midnight cigarette.’” Though not written as a duet, Brad realized the song’s impact would only be enhanced by a woman’s voice, and the voice he sought out was the wonderful Alison Krauss. “She is my favorite female vocalist,” Brad says. “She’s a gift.”

As on his first two albums, Brad closes the disc with an inspirational selection. His honky-tonk take on “Farther Along” carries the song out of the hymnal and into the present, offering a parting piece of simple optimism: a belief that one day, “farther along,” we’ll have a better understanding of so many things in life. Vince Gill, who also lends his voice to “Hold Me in Your Arms,” provides backing vocals on the gospel track.

“Tradition.” Yes. You were probably starting to wonder when it was going to crop up. It’s a word that’s frequently been associated with Brad. And why not? He has a reverence for country music history, and its influence pervaded his early years. Is *Mud on the Tires* “traditional”? Sure...but it’s “tradition” that comes in the form of guitar work that takes a sizable share of inspiration from Eric Clapton and Les Paul. Or music that comes with a wink and a smile, taking a cue from such Grammy-winning artists as Alan Jackson and the late Roger Miller, also a Tony Award winner. Speaking of Brad, Jackson praises, “He’s got a good combination there that’s hard to come by. A musician that plays and writes and is a good singer—that’s why he’s earned a lot of respect out there.”

That respect has come in many forms. Since making his debut in 1999 and being awarded the Country Music Association's Horizon Award in 2000, he's been showered with a total of 13 nominations and two more trophies by the organization—the 2001 Vocal Event award and the 2002 Music Video trophy. There have been Grammy nods (including one as Best New Artist), an Academy of Country Music award, and Brad's most-treasured honor of all, his 2001 induction to the Grand Ole Opry. There's been a solid string of Top 10 songs and Number One hits, including "I'm Gonna Miss Her" (The Fishin' Song), which remains one of the most-played songs on country radio more than a year after topping the charts and still draws huge cheers when the first note is struck in concert. There have been invitations to tour with some of country's best—Brooks & Dunn, George Strait and Alan Jackson—and Brad's own headlining role in CMT's inaugural *Most Wanted Live* tour. And there's the respect shown by his fans, who come to see him in person and have made his first two albums - 2001's *Part II* and his 1999 debut, *Who Needs Pictures* - back-to-back platinum sellers.

Mud on the Tires plays like one of Brad's concerts. Up-tempo, feel-good songs set the tone up front...ballads are mixed in—some romantic, some stark...he serves up an instrumental to showcase the band...cuts loose toward the end...and offers a closer that's a step apart from the rest. And through it all, Brad shines with prowess on guitar, with heart and humor in his voice, and with wit and sentiment in his writing.

"Whether it's 'Little Moments' or 'Mud on the Tires' or 'That's Love' or even 'Celebrity'—there's mud on these songs. There's grit. Nothing's rosy, completely. Nothing's perfect." As Brad Paisley has discovered, everyday life is filled with imperfection. Imperfection is what makes life real, and reality provides the best inspiration for true country music. And Brad lives for—and captures—"little moments" like those.

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