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## Dierks Bentley Explains Why New Single 'Riser' Is a 'Once In a Career' Song

By Katy Lindenmuth | June 15, 2015 10:00 AM EDT



Dierks Bentley's against-all-odds new single "Riser" may be the album's fifth, but it's been at the forefront of the singer's mind since the day he heard it.

"I was searching for that one song that gives the album context, and when I heard 'Riser' for the first time I knew that was the cornerstone of the album," Bentley tells Billboard. "I knew that's what the album was going to be called, and I built it around that song."

The message behind "Riser" -- that life is hard, man, and you've got to give it your all to succeed -- is almost chillingly appropriate for Bentley. The country star's career has had its fair share of false starts: He recalls launching his headlining career just as the 2007 recession hit, and *Riser* debuted with a flop of a lead single, "Bourbon in Kentucky." The title track itself, meanwhile, is a tough sell as a summertime release, considering it's a heavy, down-tempo ballad. The struggle is

real even for Bentley's pets: During his call with Billboard to talk about the new tune, he's out searching for his beagle-mix, George, who's once again gotten loose without a collar. ("He has like 20,000 lives," Bentley says.)

Co-written by Nashville aces Travis Meadows and Steve Moakler, "Riser" was sent to Bentley by his executive producer, Arturo Buenahora, amid a swirl of vulnerability: He was mourning the 2012 passing of his father, Leon, and soon he'd learn that his wife, Cassidy, was pregnant with their son, Knox. He didn't simply relate to lyrics like "The hard times put the shine into the diamond/I won't let that keep us in the ground" -- he was living them.

### **Dierks Bentley Recruits Miranda Lambert for '90s Covers Band**

"I was trying to think about the man I wanted to evolve into being," he says.

Bentley has spent the past two years trickling out singles from the Grammy-nominated *Riser*, his seventh studio album, including the No. 1s "Say You Do" and "I Hold On." This time last year, the licensed pilot was flying high on the summer smash "Drunk on a Plane." But all along, he had the secret weapon of "Riser" in his back pocket.

"I really feel like the song is going to help people who are going through a hard time," Bentley says. "I know it's connecting, I know it has that effect." Because of that, he adds, it was too important not to give it a shot on country radio: "I can't move forward from that album knowing that it's still sitting on the table."

### **Dierks Bentley Talks 'Drunk on a Plane'**

In April, he tested the waters at the 50th annual [Academy of Country Music Awards](#) by playing "Riser" for a live audience dotted with lighters (or maybe iPhones) and more than [15 million additional viewers at home](#). Bolstered by the positive feedback -- Billboard ranked it as the best performance of the night -- Universal Music Group greenlit the song as Bentley's newest single. In an effort to further strengthen the song's connection with his audience, last week he unveiled [a feature on his website](#) that allows fans to upload photos and then overlay their favorite lyrics.

As he embarks on his Sounds of Summer tour, which kicked off June 5, Bentley hopes that "Riser" continues to resonate with listeners as much as it continues to resonate with him.

"Songs and music can change people's lives," he says. "This is one of those songs you get once a career that has the possibility to do that."