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Music Grady Smith on country

Dierks Bentley's Riser: watch the exclusive video



<http://www.theguardian.com/music/2015/sep/03/dierks-bentleys-riser-watch-the-exclusive-video>

Dierks Bentley knew he wanted to release *Riser* as a single the moment he heard it. In fact, he loved the song so much that he made it the title track of his last album, released in early 2014. But Bentley also knew that an acoustic ballad about perseverance would be a tough sell at country radio, and he's been patiently waiting for the right moment to bring what he hopes will become an anthem to a national audience.

"The whole time I worked on this album, the goal was just to get to this song as a single," he says. After three straight No 1 singles on country radio (*I Hold On*, *Drunk on a Plane*, *Say You Do*), that moment has finally come. *Riser* was sent to country radio in June, and Bentley is eager to promote it. "I'm just down in the trenches fighting like hell to get this thing heard."

The song, which was written by Travis Meadows and Steve Moakler, struck a chord with Bentley, whose father died in 2012. He says finding time to grieve while trying to be a good husband and dad (Bentley and his wife had two children at the time, three now) wasn't an easy task, but it had to be done. "People are counting on you to get your shit together," he says. Unsurprisingly, the lyrics of

Riser's chorus resonated: "Hey, I'm a fighter/When darkness comes to town, I'm a lighter/A get out aliver of the fire/Survivor."

For the video, which the Guardian debuts today, Bentley was inspired by a 60 Minutes segment about families living out of their cars in order to get by. Instead of trying to tell all their stories, the video, which was directed by Wes Edwards, hones in on the tale of one individual, Amy, whom Edwards met through Safe Haven, a program in Nashville that seeks to provide housing to families in need. (Bentley plans to use Riser as a way of promoting Safe Haven in the coming weeks.) The black and white clip chronicles Amy's quest to get a roof back over her children's heads. In the final frame, Bentley and the real-life Amy can be seen together.

Bentley isn't especially worried that he released such a serious song to radio. Yes, he's scored smash hits with raucous tunes like Am I The Only One and Drunk on a Plane, but, just as often, he's waded into deeper waters on songs like Home and I Hold On. This balance is entirely intentional.

"I can slam any song out there because I have some of the most slammable," says Bentley. "But those songs are needed in your live show to keep things loose and fun so you can come back with a song like Riser halfway through your show and really hit people hard."

"I've had a lot of commercial radio success, and that's a big part of who I am," he continues. "But, man, you've gotta balance that with trying to make music that matters and albums that matter." Thus far, Bentley's good intentions haven't helped Riser rise up the charts very quickly. "I didn't think it would still be in the 40s three months out," Bentley admits. But even if Riser never gets its commercial due, Bentley is proud to have recorded it. "All you can do is hope it gets heard," he says. "And if not, I will immediately start working on Drunk on a Boat."