

Social Network Façade by Brenda Crabtree

The end of the physical body should not worry us. Rather, our concern must be that we live while we're alive and release our inner self from the spiritual death that comes from living behind a facade designed to conform to other peoples definition of who and what we are. Putting up a facade is an overt theme in both the lyrics and music video of Brad Paisley's song, "Online".

Unfortunate, simplistic lyrics place a veneer on a serious subject; that of bullying. Clearly, Paisley mocks people who create an online persona by way of a social network; albeit in a pleasant song and music video with even more pleasant "star power". The short, unattractive, overweight character portrayed in the "Online" video is apparently without redeeming qualities. Jason Alexander's character lives at home with his parents, has a job that is going nowhere, and has a car salesman pour a glass of wine over his bald head. He does, however, enjoy an exciting life of fantasy that forsakes the tedium of reality. He feels so much cooler online where he is "6' 5' and looks damn good"! What is wrong with that? The lyrics of the song have the main character continuing his online secret life "to infinity and beyond". In the video, however, the Jason Alexander character embraces his true self and wins the girl next door -- of all people, Marcia Brady! Wait....he still lives a life of fantasy.

So, at what point is an average - or less than average - person allowed to be themselves without repercussions? This song and its subsequent video are just an adult version of childhood bullying. For shame! Why must the beautiful people make fun of those with dismal lives? Who is the next target going to be?

The Band Dorks by Julie Cummings

A music video or any other visual media lends itself to a more direct interpretation than a literary piece. In Brad Paisley's music video "Online", the director in essence gives us his interpretation of the song with his use of the actors he casts and the past roles those actors have played. While the song itself is already a humorous piece, the type-casting of these actors, brings a greater sense of humor to the song.

The main player, Jason Alexander, will always be remembered for his role on "Seinfeld" as George Costanza. It's that role as the loveable loser that makes the portrayal of the Pizza Pitt worker so believable. George was full of romantic ideas, and his potential for greatness is there, but he always got in the way of himself. He tried so hard to live vicariously through his best friend Jerry just as Alexander's character in Paisley's video lives vicariously through Brad Paisley himself as he pretends to be "the" Brad Paisley in his chats "online" with the pretty girls.

It becomes evident, however, that Pizza Pitt has a true love interest in the baton twirling Maureen McCormick, better known as Marsha Brady. The difference in the casting of George Costanza over Marsha Brady is that Marsha ALWAYS got what she wanted whereas George very rarely ever did. It's that opposites attract phenomenon which makes the ending of the video all that more humorous. Two grown adults marching down the street in their 1970ish band uniforms while Marsha grabs Pizza Pitt's patootie as a sign of affection.

In the end, Marsha still gets what she wants, it's just not what we expect, and Pizza Pitt comes to the realization that he just needs to be himself in order to truly be happy. If only the rest of us would come to that same realization, maybe we'd all be much happier!

The Nerd Within by Helen Frink

Brad Paisley's "Online" video strives to engage fans and listeners through word play and an intentionally clumsy presentation of an accepted – if not exactly beloved – archetype, the hapless nerd. Although we don't embrace the nerd, each one of us sees ourselves and roots for him.

The video also showcases a prominent American artist, Mr. Paisley, and juxtaposes images of glamour and banality. For example, Mr. Paisley appears on the cover of GQ magazine and drives a Maserati while the main character of the video uses an asthma inhaler and delivers pizza in an almost wheel-less sedan.

In the video's light-hearted slice of life scenario, our nebbish pizza deliveryman knows what he is missing. After all, he wistfully watches a deified music stars webcam after suffering another indignity at the tight hand of an indignant pizza customer. Each viewer recalls his or her own humiliations and wonders how will the bespectacled nerd cope – and even better himself?

"Online" reminds us that this is the age when even chubby sci-fi fanatics can be cool online. The video relies on images in sync with the corker online to reinforce the duplicity possible during our high tech times.

In cyberspace, the archetype nerd drives a great car, lives in Hollywood and sports a buff bod. The viewer knows what he's endured and forgives him these transgressions. In a bit of Shakespearean mistaken identity shenanigans, we witness the nerd assuming a more glamour role through clothes, straw hat, electric guitar and a distinctive strut.

Ironically, "Online" reaches a pleasing resolution by abandoning word play and cyberspace chicanery. Indeed, the nerd cloaks himself in his high school band uniform to embrace a truly beloved archetype, the girl next door. With this Brad Paisley's "Online" concedes that we may experiment with another reality only to find that our genuine selves are the ones that are most deserving.

It's Not About the Slice by Nancy Hodson

Brad Paisley's music video "Online" explores the on-line life of a pizza deliveryman as he imagines his personal fantasy life. The juxtaposition of visual images works together with the lyrics and allows the viewer to observe as the deliveryman reaches the epiphany that he must own his reality.

As the video begins, the viewer sees the main character in his job as a pizza deliveryman but when he accesses the Internet his fantasy images begin to flash on screen. The first image in the video shows the reality of his delivery car, an "old Hyundai" as it rattles to a stop at its destination--a fraternity house, which immediately sets him, a "5'3 and overweight" guy, apart from the more "Hollywood" appearance of the blonde beach bum who insults him verbally as he delivers the pizza. As the "Sci-Fi fanatic mild asthmatic" returns to his delivery car and logs on to his wireless laptop, however, the images begin to shift. He sees Brad Paisley decked out in his hot cowboy hat and boots with tight jeans and dreamily states "Wow...I want to be him." The fantasy images in his head show visually on the screen as well as in the lyrics when he imagines himself as "6'5...driv[ing] a Maserati" and having a "three way chat with two women at one time." The reality of the pizza deliveryman who lives with his parents and wears a geeky "Beam Me Up" t-shirt has just transformed to his online fantasy.

As the visual images and the lyrics progress to their conclusion, our deliveryman reaches an epiphany when he finally takes some REAL action beyond his on-line existence, and sees that his reality may not be so bad after all. Whereas on-line he "live[s] in Malibu", he realizes that he **has** actually made it to L.A. "with the marching band to play tuba in the Rose Parade", a connection he has with the cute Marsha-like girl-next-door the video shows. At this point, the visuals give our deliveryman some hope beyond what the text of the lyrics manage to accomplish. The video shows the delivery man as he leaves his fantasy life online to look at an old yearbook, peek at the girl next door, and then shows him as takes some action in his real life to connect with the girl who has always been right there. He accepts himself and owns his reality as he finally discovers the truth to his opening words in the video "It's not about the slice, it's about the nice."

Walking in my Own Shoes by Julie Huff

We've all experienced it—the desire to step into another person's shoes, even for a day. It is probably not a stretch to say that there are qualities we all would like to possess that are out of our reach for the moment. In his music video "Online," Brad Paisley's goal is to illustrate that even though modern-day, technological escapes from the harsh realities of our lives exist, we should be content with our own individual reality. He effects this message through incorporating interweaving plot lines, which juxtapose fantasy with reality and hyperbole, which *initially* elicits sympathy for the main character and *ultimately* launches our imagination for the possibilities in our lives.

Paisley's video cleverly shifts back and forth from reality to fantasy. The main character is George, and we see his reality as he labors as a delivery pizza boy, drives a run-down car, accidentally walks in on his parents during a delicate moment, uses his inhaler, and chats online. This part of the plot is cleverly interwoven with lapses into his fantasy world, which demonstrate for us the person George would ideally like to be. As he sits at the computer, he imagines himself as Brad Paisley, performing onstage and chatting with beautiful women. However, the plot shifts back to reality as the beautiful women that George is imagining morph into ugly men dressed up as women. Realistically, he may be chatting online with ugly men, but he is so intent on sustaining his fantasy that he does not notice. And all the while George watches from afar the beautiful Marsha next door. He peeks at her through the window blinds and hides behind trees, but in his fantasy world, she is intent on gaining his affection as shown when he watches her wave and smile prettily as she practices twirling her baton next door.

Paisley also uses hyperbole, and this draws particular attention to George's flaws and mundane existence, which evokes the audience's sympathy. For example, as George steps out of the car, the camera gets a full view of George's clothing—sandals with athletic socks and a geeky, red and white striped pizza uniform. The targeted audience, most of whom are teenagers, immediately sympathize with the dorky George because they can imagine what it would feel like to have to wear clothing that is not stylish and to work at a job that they consider to be embarrassing. Paisley continues to use hyperbole to elicit sympathy for George as the pizza customer who pays George at the beginning of the video slaps the money on George's forehead instead of being more subtle. As a lowly pizza boy, George gets no respect, and this is not lost on the audience. Furthermore, Paisley exaggeratedly portrays George as overweight and bald with big ears. We can empathize with George because many of us have faults of our own and may have even been criticized in the past for those faults.

Interweaving plot and hyperbole marry at the end of the video as George accepts his own personal lot in life. While in a fantasy state, George peers out the window to see his beloved Marsha twirling her baton and grinning at him lasciviously. Yet, in the very next scene the plot line shifts back to reality as George realizes that he must join the band if he is sensibly to procure her affection. During this epiphany, George opts for decisive action and snags a band costume out of his closet. It is at this moment that he finally displays a facial expression of self-acceptance. We can infer from this scene that true happiness and future possibilities ultimately come from deliberately choosing to be happy in the present. Paisley takes this moment to shift back to fantasy by showing the lovely Marsha and the homely George marching side-by-side, arms intertwined. This ending lets the audience see that the possibilities could be far more than what they can imagine in reality. Paisley's skillful bantering back and forth between fantasy and reality and his humorous use of hyperbole end up being extremely effective as way to project his ultimate message: while it is fun to imagine ourselves differently, it is our own healthy inner landscape which determines once and for all our happiness in life.

Online Video Response by Robbin Jakino

“It is not about the slice, it’s about the nice.” The protagonist in Brad Paisley’s video “Online” says these words as he delivers pizza to the blonde brute who answers the door on his delivery, yet he does not believe them himself or at least does not initially believe them when applying them to himself. He more readily covers up his “slice” by embellishing his attributes to those deemed more impressive. Paisley’s video validates the human fallacy that it is necessary to become someone other than our true selves to gain acceptance and find happiness; however, the irony of the video is that it is not until the video’s protagonist accepts himself that true happiness finds him.

Many people find it easier to put on another face and become someone quite different to gain a sense of acceptance, and Paisley’s portrayal of a man who hides through his MySpace account typifies how easy it is for people to do this since they no longer have to “face” those fooled. In reality this protagonist would be classified as the typical nerd or geek who enjoys good sci-fi, experiences asthmatic episodes, and works at his minimum wage job “down at the Pizza Pit.” That reality is not exciting. In his mind that reality is not going to allow him to get the girl and experience a fairy tale life. To be “cool” he has to become more than a foot taller, athletic through martial arts, and live in the city of opportunity, Hollywood, where most people there also tend to make up who they are for acceptance of some kind. The tragedy of his betrayal is that even with the ludicrous deceptions he still is not going to gain the one thing he craves which is human connection or love. He does experience some type of joy from the betrayal since more than one lady types to him at a time, but that connection is filtered through an electrical super highway and lacks the intimacy all humans crave. Unfortunately that craving or dream of a one-on-one connection cannot be achieved through his deception since it is his mysteriousness that gets him notice and the continued deception of “wanting nothing serious” is simply code for the inability to make a reveal since the mystery then disappears and his dreams of love and laughter can no longer stay hidden behind his clouds of deception. This would then bring him back to square one in the love department, which is where he should be since he first has to love himself to revel in the love of another.

The verses in and visuals from Paisley’s video demonstrate how the perceptions of what we need may not be the reality that helps us. He was never going to be happy until he stopped acting and perpetuating more problems for himself. Fortunately, all it took was a fortuitous glance back in time and a gander across the street for him to realize that the key to making his fantasies of acceptance and happiness a reality was in his own hands and also waiting for him outside his front door.

Cool Reality by Lesli Jones

Has worked at Musician/Band. Lives in Malibu. Single. Interested in Women.

Telling the story of an overweight Sci-Fi geek living a fictitious life on a social network, Brad Paisley's single "Online" emphasizes the blur between reality and illusion. Although the tone is humorous, through celebrity cameos Paisley's video conveys two serious messages not found in the lyrics: acceptance of self and cool comes in different packages.

Selecting Jason Alexander, "George Costanza," as the video's protagonist makes the audience connect with and understand the character on a deeper level. We know George struggles with self-image and relationships and allows his parents to control him. Transferring these traits to the pizza delivery guy in the video, we sympathize with his longing to escape reality and "be" someone else. His shy crush on the beautiful girl next door heightens our sensitivity for him.

A cultural icon had to play the beautiful girl next door compels the audience to consider the unlikely actuality of a relationship between the nerd and the hot girl. Maureen McCormick, the pretty, perky, and popular "Marsha Brady," splendidly fills the role. Marsha is the girl that most boys in her Southern California town want to date. Marsha is the girl of many young men's fantasies. Marsha, friendly and flirtatious, must give George a conciliatory wave or a kind smile.

As reality and illusion intertwine, a guitar-riffing George struts onto Paisley's stage. Smiling, singing, and obviously enamored with George, country music phenomenon Taylor Swift and pal Kellie Pickler perform as his backup dancers. These modern day celebrities move us forward into present tense, and we progress toward authenticity while the pendulum slowly swings away from illusion and toward reality slowly as George's self-realization begins.

Conquering his feelings of inadequacy through his fantasy, George completes his epiphany. He can now be George. He does not have to pretend to be anyone. He is valuable and worthy of love and acceptance. Confident in his band uniform, he snags the beautiful girl next door, as her gestures were indeed sincere, and they march into the sunset.

Has worked at Pizza Pitt. Lives in Parents' house. In a relationship with Marsha Brady.

Geek Chic: Paisley's Music Video Accomplishes What Words Did Not by Lindsey Lundquist

A symbiotic relationship is formed between the song "Online" by Brad Paisley and the video representation. Typically a video's purpose is to literally illustrate the lyrics of a song, which this music video does, however this video not only supports the words being sung but also adds to it a deeper, more personal message that the lyrics left out. Not only does the video of "Online" teach the audience to laugh at themselves for the way they treat technology (making oneself out to be better, more attractive, more intelligent, "so much cooler online") as the lyrics suggest, but also teaches through the juxtaposition of reality and the imaginary that one's reality is never as bad as one may think—that while it is great to dream, nothing ever beats "the real deal," so the individual must find a way to improve his/her life.

The video begins with the character (played by Jason Alexander from Seinfeld), about which Brad Paisley sings, making his way down the street in his sad, wiggling, botched up car to the front door of a swanky house where he must deliver pizza to the stereotypical "frat boy" whose hair has been bleached to near death. Immediately the contrast begins with the geeky, chubby, balding pizza delivery boy and the high-living party boy with a house filled with girls and fun. The character realizes, "hmm, that's the life I want," and thus begins the literal translation of lyrics to images.

The majority of the video follows along with what Brad Paisley sings, and makes what listeners might have chuckled to while playing the song on the radio an even more hysterical experience the audience identifies with the strong desire of pretending to be what they are not. Paisley's character begins the experiment of recreation online where one can make themselves out to be 6'5" and a Calvin Klein model, or live out their fantasies of having a threesome. Of course the play of reality occasionally comes back when Paisley acknowledges that the character's three way is actually just a chat with two women online at the same time. As the video continues the audience occasionally feels nostalgia thinking "oh, I've done that!" or "a guy pulled that on me before and he ended up being a D&D nerd living in his sister's garage." The video is successful in bringing out the emotion that Paisley sings and allows his listeners to connect to his Geek.

However, the end of the video representation takes a pleasantly unexpected turn that the lyrics did not include; where the song continues to laugh and joke about the surreal life created online, the video leaves those watching with a new motivation. Geek arrives at the epiphany that while he whittles away online in a fake reality, it will never compare to his physical reality and he is wasting his time in the inter-web. The video fulfills a needed impetus to find a true happiness that the lyrics did not.

Loser to Lover Boy by Sharon McKemie

Jason Alexander plays the loser pizza delivery guy in Brad Paisley's music video, "Online." Alexander, wearing a "Beam Me Up" t-shirt, portrays the decidedly dorky guy whose real-life, drab existence as a slightly overweight asthmatic who wears glasses, likes science fiction, lives with his parents, and drives an old Hyundai becomes suddenly, magically "cool" in an online MySpace existence as Brad Paisley. Alexander's alter ego is one of a dynamic, talented entertainer who attracts girls, lives in Hollywood, drives a sporty Maserati, and has posed for *GQ*. The refrain "I'm so much cooler online" contrasts with Alexander's ordinary life where the only time he was ever in L.A. was playing the tuba in the Rose Parade. Not only does Alexander desire the virtual world where dreams come true, but his parents want in on the fantasy life, too. The video's message is shown through the quirky characterizations and the contrast of Alexander's fantasy life versus his reality.

Alexander's family is humorously portrayed by notable actors with a flair for the tongue-in-cheek play on his online fantasy life. Maureen McCormick acts as the cute girl next door who is slightly goofy. William Shatner plays the father and Estelle Harris is Alexander's mom. Shatner and Harris also want desirable personalities and both talk about creating their own MySpace accounts. The irony is Alexander is shown dancing and prancing with Taylor Swift, looking like an honest-to-goodness real singer and then in the next frame he's the dork looking at the neighbor girl again. Finally, at the end of the video Alexander has an epiphany after being confronted by Brad Paisley and his dad asking, "What the hell are you doing?" Realizing his worth in real life is more meaningful than a fantasy life, Alexander embraces his inner-dorkiness and marches off, playing the tuba in his band uniform with Maureen McCormick on his arm, an adoring expression on her face. Huey Lewis has it right, "It's hip to be square!"

Turn Off by Meggan Narvaez

Present-day visual media has a dual nature: it can be considered both a blessing and a curse. The abundant blessings of easy access to millions of websites, hundreds of television channels with nearly every conceivable plot line, and up-to-the-minute “status updates” have brought the world to the fingertips of anyone with internet access. However, ripe fruit soon spoils. Many unfortunate ramifications have come along with the boon of easy access to the internet; one of those unfortunate results is the complete immersion in the made-up fantasy readily available online at the expense of facing reality. This is the case with the protagonist in the music video for country artist Brad Paisley’s song “Online.” This video demonstrates the ridiculousness of choosing fantasy over reality with the use of a humorous plot line and a careful casting of actors.

The humorous plot line emphasizes how silly it can be to choose an unreal fantasy life over the happiness real life can provide. The video shows the protagonist in several situations that have become stereotypical to the portrayal of someone immersed in online life: he is too old to be living with his parents, works in pizza delivery, enjoys science fiction role playing, and tries to attract women online with false advertising. These situations are portrayed in a humorous way that takes the pathetic element out of the mind of the viewers and directs them instead to identify with the lighter side of the predicament, reinforcing the ridiculousness of making a choice to live online.

Taking the humor a step further, the careful casting of the video’s actors contributes to the video’s purpose. The video features several easily recognizable faces; even without knowing all the actor’s names, most viewers will recognize at least a few actors who have become known, in part, for the type of characters they play, characters that fit well into the stereotypical roles within the video: the overbearing mother, the passive father, the socially awkward nerd, and the innocent girl next door. In this case, being easily recognizable and playing a stereotypical role lends to the humorous nature of the video. And if to cause laughter is to entertain, and if to entertain is to engage, then to engage is to effectively communicate.

The music video to Brad Paisley’s song “Online” is a product of present-day technology that is visually rich. This wealth of visual entertainment provides both many opportunities for growth and many challenges to those who invest many an hour in front of the computer. Through the use of a humorous plot line and a careful casting of its characters, this video portrays the ridiculousness of choosing a life of fantasy over the pleasures to be had in reality. This entertaining approach to addressing the issue of fantasy versus reality may very well cause a few do as the same as the video’s protagonist: turn off the computer, open the curtain, and see the light.

Power Me Up! by Mary Gail Neuding

Personal Profile: 5' 6, blonde hair, blue eyes, 115 lbs.; have been mistaken for Jennifer Aniston

Status: Single, interested in men

Profile Picture: None (Suggest a profile picture for this user...)

The angel on my right shoulder whispers into my ear, "Jennifer Aniston! Lawdy, girl! That's taking it a bit far, isn't it? The truth is that you look more like Star Jones before her gastric bypass..." The devil on my left shoulder jeers, "Go ahead! It's not like you'll ever have to meet this person anyway." Many people today fall prey to this very dilemma: online integrity vs. online fantasy. Brad Paisley's video "On Line" humorously creates the fine line between a person's actual persona and his fantasy construct through its use of character casting and interweaving plot lines in order to demonstrate the theme that even though fantasizing is entertaining, being truthful to oneself is immeasurably more rewarding in the long run.

Paisley's video portrays George Kastanza as the perfect geek who delivers pizza and gets shot down daily by all the jocks in town who throw cool parties. Anyone who has ever watched the TV show *Taxi* remembers him as the guy who just never quite gets it right, but is loveable beyond compare; everyone can identify with this character choice due to his likeability and eccentricity. This perfect character choice adds a humorous touch to this video as well; even kids who have never watched the show believe that this dufus is a true geek with an asthma inhaler and *Star Trek* dad to prove it, who needs a major make-over to improve his life. In contrast, Brad Paisley becomes his new fantasy persona as George begins to fashion himself into a country western singer each time he fires up his lap top. His computer allows him to construct his perfect self with the click of the keys as he sits anonymously behind the screen. The moment he powers up, George emerges as a new man who is capable of getting all the girls, being adored by huge audiences, and feeling confident as a GQ model who rakes in the big dough and drives a Maserati. At that moment, he feels fulfilled and self-confident, leading him to actually blur the lines of fantasy and reality.

The most brilliant piece of the video occurs when George becomes Brad and goes out on the stage as himself with his new persona's self-confidence. The viewing audience laughs harder as George's fantasy is now so exaggerated that he gets everything he could possibly imagine in his performance of a life-time. But eventually, when George snaps back into reality, we as the video viewers recognize that this ephemeral dream could happen to us as well.

His character reminds viewers about how easy it is to stretch the truth as one sits behind the screen with the blinking cursor. The tap of the keys creates power! Viewers laugh but recognize the glaring truth with a cautious smile...

With a sigh, I type the truth and upload a current picture: brown hair, brown eyes, glasses, 230 pounds worth of sunny disposition and quick wit... It was fun for just a moment, but I know I will sleep better tonight...

Online Video Response by Dawn Nicholson

The pizza guy's revelation of self-worth in Brad Paisley's delightfully amusing music video "Online" is artfully accomplished by a clearly defining moment of recognition. To achieve his purpose, Paisley first blurs the lines between fantasy and reality as his sapless protagonist creates a hunky rock star persona online. Weaving his universal message into the plot line, Paisley uses song lyrics (diction), the love of the girl next door, and some bumbling missteps to emphasize that anyone can be the "ideal" man.

While the chorus' "So much cooler online" initially reflects the pizza guy's desires, the lyrics ironically mean the opposite by the end of the video. As the geeky pizza guy imagines himself a cooler 6'5" good-looking black belt in karate, his lack of self-esteem keeps him in his sci-fi basement dwelling rut that has become his life. Hiding behind the veil of MySpace, he vicariously lives a rock star life while not seeing that true love and acceptance are right next door.

Through some bumbling missteps and reminiscing, the pizza guy begins to see the opportunity for happiness that exists with the girl who values him simply for who he already is. The social role he had created online, therefore, becomes unnecessary. He is able to draw on his one moment of greatness playing tuba in the Rose Parade to realize his own coolness is a state of mind that still exists. Paisley's universal message of "there are all kinds of cool" helps the now cool protagonist win the girl and a chance at a new life and leave his online persona behind.

Paisley`s Poetic Perversion...by.Jamie.Ryland

In today`s world, people are constantly bombarded with sexuality. The idea that “sex sells” has become so rampant in advertising that fast food restaurants hire half-dressed supermodels to lick their lips seductively after each bite of greasy burger in commercials, hair style brands come with the near promise of increased sexual encounters if their product is used, and even children`s sneaker companies create products geared at firming up the back side of young, preadolescent girls. It does not end there, though. Television networks and record labels have joined in this sexual overstimulation by marketing filth like *Jersey Shore* and “Lick You Like a Lollipop” toward the youth of the nation as forms of daily entertainment. However, a guiding light in the world of pop culture and entertainment that seemed to ground itself in steep tradition, family values, and moral decency was always the tried and true American product of country music. To these musicians, the purpose of their work stood in the fact that human enjoyment was found not in sexual, pleasure-filled moments but in simple, natural beauties of life like a first kiss, father/daughter wedding dance, or through lifelong friendships. But, as people begin to change, so must the times. A new breed of country star has emerged in the new sexually charged day in age, one that not only plays on sexual deviance, but manages to even force quirky humor on it, all done with a smiling face and catchy beat—that of a Mr. Brad Paisley.

In the newest installment of Paisley`s work, the song “Online” is formatted as a testimony from an obviously unattractive, unfulfilled, depressed individual who finds no fault in the act of lying about himself to unknowing women online in the hope of attaining some form of sexual stimulation in the process. By having the main character fabricate that he “has got a set of six pack abs that will blow your mind,” “drive[s] a Maserati,” and is “mysterious,” Paisley plays on the assumption that females are as shallow, materialistic, and gullible as his protagonist is in the song. This not only should be considered insulting to all women, but it should anger society that such traits would ever be considered humorous or honorable for the young people of today to attain.

It would be understandable how a person could overlook these now seemingly blatant insults aimed at the female psyche, especially when the song is associated with a music video that seeks to promote the main character as an easily likable person, despite his devious habit. It would even be understandable how a person could sing the chorus of the song and be unaware that Paisley breaks the line “Even on a slow day I can have a three way chat with two women at one time” with a subtle pause to emphasize the words “three way” (as in a three way sexual encounter). But, by no means is it understandable how society can still classify country music of today as remotely having the same heartfelt, rustic, and pure hearted quality that it did when Patsy Klein and Gene Autry graced the stage of the Grand Ole Opry. That kind of music is gone now. And all that is left is what society accepts as its replacement.

Reality vs. Fantasy by Devon Vochoska

Reality and fantasy (or what one perceives as their fantasy) can be drastically different from one another. In the music video, “Online” by Brad Paisley the main character, George, struggles with feeling accepted in his own skin, but by the end has a self discovery moment.

The first moment of rejection appears at the very beginning of the video when George delivers a pizza to a house party and quickly has the door slammed in his face; reminding him just how big of ‘loser’ he really is. He then goes home and proceeds to set up an internet account of some sort. The online outlet allows him to mold other’s perception of him. He really drives a Hyundai when he says he drives a Maserati. George is not a very tall man but says he is 6 foot 5 inches; probably because he thinks this is what the ladies like. He dreams of going to L.A. for another instance other than playing the tuba in the Rose Parade. Even though George comes up with all of these elaborate fantasies he has a moment of self revelation/discovery towards the end.

At the end of the video he happily marches off with the “average” girl next door who has always accepted George for who he really is, not who he portrayed himself to be online. George realizes at the end of his experience that he can be happy with who he really, thus his moment of self discovery and acceptance.

So Much Cooler Online by Angela Young

Brad Paisley's "Online" music video shows how the media, such as internet and music icons, can have a crucial effect on people. Society can easily have a blurry vision between reality and fantasy, and Paisley is making a clear statement about this—namely, that people are generally dissatisfied with their lives, and they look for ways better their current circumstances. The video showcases the fact that people become content within their own personal reality and advocates this cause by contrasting a character's real life and fantasy life.

Paisley exercises great judgment when he casts George Kastanza, a homely, down-to-earth, balding gentleman as the main character of his video. George is the perfect choice because his persona represents many attributes that the media scorns—lack of fashion sense, geekiness, and a less-than-desirable physique. In this video, George is portrayed as a sorry, middle-aged man who wants nothing more than to escape his drab life. He fantasizes about becoming Brad Paisley, performing on stage, and conquering beautiful women. His computer is his only window of opportunity to get a taste of this type of lifestyle.

In reality, George lives with his parents and has the difficulties that that entails. George's father intrudes upon his privacy by accessing his computer occasionally. He has an embarrassing fast food job whereby he is the object of scorn to those even younger than he is. He suffers physical abnormalities such as big ears and asthma, and he is infatuated with a girl who apparently is out of his league. On the other hand, George's fantasy life is rich. When George escapes into his wildest dreams, he is a country star who is idolized. He performs onstage, and his fans shower him with adoration. He is the object of admiration for beautiful women whom he chats with online. For example, he thinks that a "three-way" is chatting online with two women at the same time. In short, he is rich and successful.

These two lives merge at the end of the video when George takes matters into his own hands. He glances out the window to look at the object of his affection whom he feels he would never be able to date, and he sees her twirling the baton. In a moment of self-realization, he decides to join the band so that he may finally be near her. He finally discovers that he must take action, but more importantly, that he must accept himself for who he is at the present time. Paisley takes this moment to bring back George's fantasy life in order to show how successful George will be now that his perspective about himself has changed. George and his lady-friend march hand-in-hand in their band costumes, eyeing each other lovingly. Paisley has made his point: it is much better to be oneself—to own one's own reality.

Bethany Whinnem

As a Xennial, the new term for the generation in between the “Millennials” and the “Gen-xers”, I am both laughing and crying at Brad Paisley’s shockingly truthful “Online” because it cuts at the heart of this superficial culture. I have always been cool—online and off. I am the generation that played Oregon Trail in school and faithfully programmed my C-Logo turtle to make box after box after box on our state-of-the-art Apple Macintosh IIs in my Catholic school’s computer class. I embraced the promise of the future with each narrow escape from dysentery.

Later, in high school, I remember the palpable excitement in the house when we were no longer expecting any calls and I was allowed to “sign-in”—an experience fraught with imposed patience, as the little yellow man attempted to run across three boxes to the most abhorrent sound in the word. I praised Jesus when he’d meet his friends in that third panel. I sat there cross-fingered, hoping that I hadn’t missed my friends’ allowed online time or that their parents hadn’t gotten a call. As if we would actually use a phone when we were so much “cooler online”!

But, there were rules. There were phone bills. There were other people in the house. There was life to live. So when the robotic words “good-bye” echoed through the speakers that was it (unless you had to pull an all-nighter studying and didn’t tell your parents).

So, I did grow up digital. I still am. I have an iPhone, iPod, Apple Watch, and a Mac. I grade with voice comments and text boxes. I love technology. I swear. But, I hate what it is doing to this generation.

My students don’t have time to care about grades when they have to spend practically every minute of their day curating themselves online. I don’t believe they have many genuine friends or even fully understand the definition of friend because they have over 1000 and “don’t want nothing serious.” It’s much cooler to keep things “mysterious... ‘cause even on a slow day [they] can have a three way chat with two women at one time.” Why have a discussion when they can tweet instantaneous things that pop into their heads for the world to see?

The phone—their most prized appendage and greatest tool—is both a weapon and a punishment. They make fun of Gatsby’s buying fancy shirts for Daisy and keeping a scrapbook of her life, but don’t see how their own posing profiles send the same message or acknowledge their digital stalking habits. Their interactions are filtered. They complain of being tired but put the phone on their pillow at night because of their deep fear of missing out and not being relevant.

For their sakes, I wish there were an off-switch—some socially acceptable time to be free, to be happy, to live. I wish they valued “play[ing] the tuba in the Rose Parade” more than taking duck-face selfies in the bathroom. I wish that they didn’t feel that they HAD to “grow another foot and lose a bunch of weight everytime [they] log in.” I wish they would live and not need proof of living. I wish they had times when the little yellow man couldn’t make it through the second box. I wish they felt as cool off line.

In Brad Paisley's "Online" the subject of the song and his online persona are described by base characteristics that are mostly either visually apparent or indicative of their standing in society rather than their personality. The characterization of both contribute to how they are perceived in society. The "real" person is described by his shortcomings, (dis)abilities, or associations with societal stigmas, such as living with his parents as an adult, while the "online" persona is described by his seemingly attractive physical features and his associations with wealth and glamor, such as his ownership of a Maserati. Both of these descriptions in the lyrics fail to take into consideration the actual personalities of both individuals, but they do illustrate the vain, abstract concept of "coolness." As Paisley sings, "When you have my kind of stats, it's hard to get a date." These characteristics are seen as impersonal statistics that add to one's social capital and an even more abstract "coolness" rating that influences both the possible start and continuation of relationships online and off. The internet is more useful for compiling these statistics, true, false, or in between, than for showing personal attributes that are really useful in determining a person's character.

Andrew Johnson

Tricia Gabor
Ms. Effinger
2 August 2017

Literary Response Journal for "Online" by Brad Paisley

Although Brad Paisley's song "Online" is an amusing satirical up-tempo comparison of how many individuals cope with life by making their own "better" reality online, I did not agree with his message. In the song, Paisley tells the story of a shy pizza guy, played by Jason Alexander in the video, who "still (lives) with mom and dad", is a fan of science fiction, has mild asthma, is short, overweight and is lacking in dating experience.

However, we soon realize that he has an online account with MySpace where he has created a different persona – one that is much more appealing to others who don't know his true identity. Although he's never really traveled, hangs mainly in his basement, and is in the marching band, online he's "6'5" ...drive(s) a Maserati...(has) a black belt in Karate" and has become a more cultured and civilized gentleman. He's single and rich, goes to Hollywood and Malibu where he poses for different fashion magazines and designers such as GQ and Calvin Klein, and becomes a much more attractive catch for someone looking to chat with him. He has become THE person who everyone wants to be and THE one with whom everyone wants to be.

In my opinion, although it won a video of the year award at the CMA awards and many enjoy and think it is a clever video, especially with the cameo appearances of various celebrities including Alexander, William Shatner, Estelle Harris, Taylor Swift and Kellie Pickler, it appears that Paisley is at times promoting a fictitious individual who is much more "mysterious" and "cooler" online than when he is offline. I'm not sure I agree with this assessment. The alternate personalities that the geek in the video portray promote the idea that the only way to be cool is to be taller, more attractive, and to not be committed to one person, seen in his play on words that "even on a slow day, I can have a three-way /Chat with two women at one time". This is not a reality for many people, and I think it promotes a false sense of what is more important – beauty, looks and being with someone for looks over their personality. He repeats over and over that he's "so much cooler online", but yet the video shows him getting the girl in the end? Was this a cop-out because he couldn't find someone online, or did he not want to? Has the pizza guy truly changed?

The music video "Online" by Brad Paisley clearly mocks our society's use of the internet to hide who we truly are, thereby broaching the notion of appearance versus reality and the extent to which individuals not only present themselves honestly, but, even more so, the extent to which an individual is truly and deeply unhappy with themselves and who they are. Paisley juxtaposes a "myspace guy," played by Jason Alexander, with a "rock star," played by Brad Paisley himself, to start, using the upbeat, repetitive chorus to establish that Jason Alexander's character is "so much cooler online." It is clear from Alexander's exasperated expressions throughout the initial scenes that he is using the Internet to hide--he is "cooler" because he can *pretend* to be someone he is not. He is unhappy, and the internet is his outlet, his escape from his reality and current life. Interestingly, Alexander's character does not end up becoming a "rock star" or Brad Paisley, as one might expect at the end of this video; instead, he finally notices the shy, "dorky" girl next door, and they march away in their respective band uniforms. This choice further illustrates the thematic elements of not only appearance versus reality, as he in no way can truly achieve this fake appearance he cultivated online to be "cooler," but more so seems to be Paisley's plea to embrace who you are and what makes you you. The words mock being "cooler online," and this final, poignant, but silly image, establishes that embracing oneself and one's own beauty is truly what makes one "cool," on or off line.

-- Meghan Blume

*I still live with my mom and dad
I'm 5',3" and overweight*

*I'm a sci-fi fanatic
Mild asthmatic
Never been to second base*

#10 Response

Brad Paisley's timely single, "Online" was a country music chart topper in 2007. It's catchy hook and upbeat mood likely entranced audiences that were swinging into a poppier form of country that would eventually bring us crossover stars like Taylor Swift and Kenny Chesney. Nonetheless, when watching this video ten years after its release, one is immediately put-off by some of the content in the song. Paisley perpetuates the bullying seen in his video through the lyrics and makes his audience OK with demeaning people who escape reality using the internet. When Paisley creates his subject, they are "5',3" and overweight... a sci-fi fanatic, mild asthmatic [who's] never been to second base". This characterization is problematic because the song goes on to playfully paint people who go online as liars and cons who don't fit in or contribute to society meaningfully. While the video ends with the audience seeing the 5',3" asthmatic marching away gleefully with girl who shares his passions in real life, Paisley's lyrics message that participating in online activities is *something losers do*. Paisley's point of view is characterized in the video by a fit, tall, traditionally handsome white male who slaps a tip on the pizza guy's forehead. This may not seem related, but the scene exposes the line, "never been to second base". Paisley presents a despicable social norm, one that dictates that being masculine and valuable in society means grabbing a girl's breast. This is not only problematic in its objectification of women, but also in the expectations of masculinity because the idea promotes shaming those who aren't as masculine by that standard. It's important to note that despite it's success on the country charts, "Online" only made it to the thirty-ninth position on the Billboard US charts and eighty-ninth on the Billboard Pop charts. These popularity statistics can provide a closer look at societal norms in different regional communities. One may assume that the popularity of songs like this resonate with the audience, thus reflecting their norms and values, which is upsetting. The song and video present a sad and unfortunate reality that many in the US are content with bullying those who don't fit their social norms.

In "Online" by Brad Paisley, we are shown how envy and the constant need to fit in can lead people to put on a façade, instead of embracing their own unique qualities and beauty. The character in the video feels as if he is "so much cooler online", where he can enjoy an exciting life of fantasy. Eventually the realization that beauty and "coolness" come from within and that beauty is in the eye of the beholder, becomes apparent. He realizes that it's OK to be average.

--Lisa Naquin

Anna Sabella

LRJ “Online”

Despite the fact that the song “Online” was released just over ten years ago, Brad Paisley’s ode to the Internet has many themes that remain true today. One could even argue the song is more relevant today than it was a decade ago. The lines that resonated with me were, “there’s a whole other me/ that you need to see/ Go check out MySpace”. This is so clear in our culture, as people are often not their true selves online. People tend to post the best, funniest, or most dramatic moments online. Desperate for connections, they use literal and figurative filters to get responses and reactions. “Online” reminded me of the haunting music video of Moby’s [“Lost in the World Like Me”](#) set to the stark black and white illustrations of Steve Cutts. “Online” is a modern “e-mail fairytale” with a happy ending, while Moby’s version is a bit more terrifying in its disturbing view of our online reality.

George Costanza (Jason Alexander),

What does it feel like to be the antithesis of Brad Paisley?

If only you existed only online. No one would know how hideous you actually are.

How dare you be famous. How dare your character George date 8s and 10s on the decades long hit television show *Seinfeld*.

You used to be an inspiration to the 5'3", portly bald male. You gave the losers hope that they could actively date, have lots of friends, and work for the Yankees!

How does it feel to have your look, your likes depicted grotesque and the butt of a six-pack clad white male popstar in his 40s' jokes?.

Jason, how does it feel to turn on George?

How does it feel to be used by Brad Paisley to sell the depressing song masked as a comedy skit "Online"?

by Melissa Evans

LRJ: "Online"

Brad Paisley's music video "Online" appeals to the underdog in all of us. The video tells the story of a middle-aged pizza delivery man and how he uses the internet to reinvent himself online. It uses humor to make light of certain social situations that a lot of folks can relate to and ends with the pizza delivery man changing places with Brad Paisley on stage at a concert. The lyrics capture how many of us feel the need to portray ourselves as "so much cooler online" by fudging some details about ourselves and our personal lives here and there. For example, the lyrics "I grow another foot and lose a little weight every time I login" calls out to anyone else that adapted their personal online profile in a more pleasing way--and who can't relate to that? The song plays on the "Sci-Fi fanatics, mild asthmatics" and other social outliers that transform themselves on sites like "MySpace" or in chat rooms by creating a virtual identity and pretend (if they want to) to be someone they are not online. Ultimately, it's a funny video with a catchy tune that makes you smile and check your profile.

In Brad Paisley's, "Online," I was fascinated by the role women played as minor characters. In the video, Paisley croons, "I'm so much cooler online," as the main character creates his ideal image of masculinity: strength, virility, and wealth. Throughout the video, he constantly portrays women as vehicles to status, "firing up his mac" to chat with women and build his online persona. The final, "happy ever after" image is the protagonist and his love interest marching off into the sunset, but even then her role is to depict him as attractive and valued (in the overt sexualization of the image). Overall, women play a rather flat role, bolstering notions of traditional masculinity.

-- Rachel Glasser

Brad Paisley's "Online" features a whole cast of comedic character's that breaks out my inner 90s child that had been suppressed when I began "adulthood" at the early age of twenty-one. Jason Alexander's portrayal of a nerd that has all but given up hope in being found loved and attracted by other stars from my childhood. Although the message of the video and the message of the lyrics are completely contrasting, the video gives hope to my inner bullied middle school self. The former "Mild asthmatic" child that could not hold a note can now be a completely different person in the online world. Is it a facade? Yes. Is it realistic that a person who played the trumpet in high school can now get the football player? Possibly.

As I am older and the insecure 90's child crawls further and further back into her hole, I find that my "online self" can be confident enough to "Even on a slow day...have a three way" if desired. The progression of confidence shown through the video was brought through in effectiveness by the song lyrics. Jason Alexander's character gets the girl in the end because he gave up hiding and accepted who he truly was.

Cristina Smarra

Darling Brad

An LRJ from Reade S. Whinnem

Oh, Brad Paisley, you got it all
wrong in "Online." Don't you see
I am not "so much cooler online."

Online, sweet Brad, my wife
posts pictures that show off my paunch.
My spindly legs and nobby knees
bend awkwardly and my stubbly chin
looks pocked and blotchy,
not Don Johnson at all.

(Sweet Brad, do you know
who Don Johnson is?
The suave Tubbs?
The moody Crocket?
Never mind, sweet Brad,
never mind.)

Online, tender Brad,
between algebra and P.E.,
Amazon slips a note to Facebook
claiming that I am a nerd, and suddenly
 a new Lovecraft T-shirt is available!
 the new Doctor Who has a vagina!
 and the new Star Trek role playing game is available
NOW NOW CLICK HERE RIGHT NOW!!!

(Tender Brad, have ever considered
who is sexier, Kirk or Spock? The answer is
Spock, tender Brad, because,
like me, Spock plays hard to get.)

Online... molten hot, rippled abs Brad,
the red buttons are under the fingers
of the mockers, the bullies, the trolls, the pussy grabbers.
the ones I tolerated in high school knowing that
one day, some way, somehow...
patience and kindness and
DARE I SAY IT
PERSISTENCE
would win out over all.

(Molten hot, rippled abs Brad,
were you ever pushed down in the snow?
Dragged out of your seat in the cafeteria?
Left whispering in the snow
while others sang around the fire?)

Oh, darling Hollywood Brad,
how do you claim that
in the virtual world you "look damn good?"
Online is razors and lies, and
more often than not, Brad, we get

Exactly
Precisely
Surgically
Digitally

What God
(And the universe)
Bestows

Analysis of Brad Paisley's "Online" Video

The music video "Online" by Brad Paisley is insightfully comic which is masterfully accomplished through the use of well-known popular icons. Jason Alexander, known for his role as nerdy "George" on the hit television series *Seinfeld*, portrays a hopeless computer geek who desperately wants to be a movie star. The video depicts dual story lines of a pizza delivery boy who still lives at home with his parents and a country music star who gets all the ladies and appears on the cover of *GQ* magazine. Also included in the video to give it a comic, nostalgic feel is Maureen McCormick who played "Marsha Brady" in the hit television series *The Brady Bunch*. This comic feel is seen through the main characters mannerisms especially when he struts on stage with a guitar singing live at one of Brad Paisley's concerts, appearing with hot superstars Taylor Swift and Kelly Pickler. William Shatner, a famous actor, who plays the man's father, adds the icing to the comedic cake of this masterpiece. The majority of this witty video is humorous and yet, introspective.

by Michelle Morse and Susan Penny

The effect of the music video for Brad Paisley's single "Online" blurs the line between reality and perception in an endearingly awkward manner. The geeky (anti)hero of the video and the handsome singer appear interchangeably, which serves to illustrate how fantasy and reality become comingled. Initially, it's painfully obvious that the geek is only pretending or imagining that he possesses the qualities he admires in the singer. But at the end of the video, the geek triumphantly steps into the singer's shoes (or should I say boots?). Unfortunately, reality intrudes; the images of the stage and cheering crowd give way to his "basement bedroom" and his demanding father. But the geek is transformed by his fantasy; he discovers enough self-confidence to act on his clearly requited feelings for the girl next door, who has been an object of fascination since high school. The final shot of the video, where band geek and majorette happily march down the street, clearly shows that the geek no longer needs to pretend he's someone else in order to get both the girl and a life.

by Tammy Vinson