

## The Letter

(The Box Tops)

Gimme a ticket for an aeroplane  
I ain't got time to take a fast  
train  
Lonely days are gone, I'm a  
goin' home  
My baby jus' wrote me a letter

I don't care how much money I  
gotta spend  
I got to get back to my baby  
again  
Lonely days are gone, I'm a  
goin' home  
My baby jus' wrote me a letter

Well, she wrote me a letter  
Saying she couldn't live without  
me no more  
Listen mister can't you see  
I gotta get back to my baby once  
more  
Any way, yeah

Gimme a ticket for an aeroplane  
I ain't got time to take a fast  
train  
Lonely days are gone, I'm a  
goin' home  
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"The Letter" is a song written by Wayne Carson that was first recorded by the American rock band the Box Tops in 1967. It was sung in a gruff blue-eyed soul style by Alex Chilton. The song was the group's first and biggest record chart hit, reaching number one in the United States and Canada. It was also an international success and reached the top ten in several other countries.

"The Letter" launched Chilton's career and inspired numerous cover versions. English rock and soul singer Joe Cocker's 1970 rendition became his first top ten single in the U.S.; several other artists have recorded versions of the song, which also reached the record charts.

Rolling Stone magazine included the Box Tops original at number 372 on its list of the "500 Greatest Songs of All Time"; the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame added it to the list of the "500 Songs That Shaped Rock and Roll". In 2011, the single was inducted into the Grammy Hall of Fame.

Wayne Carson wrote "The Letter", built on an opening line suggested by his father: "Give me a ticket for an aeroplane". Carson included the song on a demo tape he gave to Chips Moman, owner of American Sound Studio in Memphis, Tennessee. When studio associate Dan Penn was looking for an opportunity to produce more songs, Moman suggested a local group, the DeVilles, who had a new lead singer, sixteen year-old Alex Chilton. The other four members of the group that played on the session were Danny Smythe on drums, Richard Malone on guitar, John Evans on organ, and Russ Caccamisi on bass. Penn gave the group Carson's demo tape for some songs to work up. With little or no rehearsal, the group arrived at American Sound to record "The Letter". Chilton recalled:

About thirty takes were required for the basic track. Then Penn had Mike Leach prepare a string and horn arrangement for the song to give it a fuller sound.[5] Leach recalled: "My very first string arrangement was 'The Letter', and the only reason I did that was because I knew how to write music notation ... Nobody else in the group did or I'm sure someone else would have gotten the call." Penn also overdubbed the sound of an airplane taking off to the track from a special effects record that had been checked out from the local library. He explained:

That was a big part of the record ... When I finished it up, I played it for Chips [Moman], and he said, "That's a pretty good little rock & roll record, but you've got to take that airplane off it." I said, "If the record's going out, it's going out with the airplane on it". He said, "Okay, it's your record."

The DeVilles were renamed the Box Tops and "The Letter", at only 1 minute, 58 seconds, was released by Mala Records, a subsidiary of Bell Records.

"The Letter" reached number one on the Hot 100 singles chart published by Billboard magazine on September 23, 1967. It remained at the top position for four weeks and Billboard ranked the record as the number two song for 1967. The single sold more than one million copies and the RIAA certified it as gold.