

ACM Entertainer of the Year Nominee 2015: Jason Aldean

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For years, Jason Aldean has been bringing arena-rock sounds and sensibilities to country music. In fact, some country purists may, at times, have felt he was a bit too rock for country.

But when he introduced his 2014 album *Old Boots, New Dirt* via the lead single “Burnin’ It Down,” it sounded like Aldean was shifting toward a more R&B, even EDM-influenced direction. In fact, if you listen to the beginning of “Burnin’ It Down” before Aldean starts singing, you might think that it was an Usher song featuring a steel guitar player.

Which is just fine with Aldean. As he told Radio.com, when he first heard the demo for the song, “It didn’t sound like anything else we had for the album so far. A lot of times those are the songs that allow you to take a couple of different paths that maybe you wouldn’t have normally taken.”

It wasn’t just that the music was a sonic departure for him; the lyrics were a bit racy compared to Jason’s earlier work. In fact, they were pretty racy for any mainstream country artist.

But Aldean has never wanted to conform to convention, and he makes no apologies for that. “Anytime you’re doing anything like that, that’s different, something that you haven’t done before, or that isn’t what people are used to hearing from you, you’re gonna have a lot of people that are sort of scared of it, a little nervous.”

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And as he told us earlier this year, “I think one of the worst things somebody can say is, ‘Yeah, it’s OK.’ That means it has done absolutely nothing for you. I want it to hit a nerve one way or another. If you hate it, you’ll be talking about it, and that’s all I want.”

Old Boots New Dirt topped the Billboard Top 200 Album charts; “Burnin’ It Down” was a No. 1 single at country and even reached the pop Top 20. Safe to say, lots of people loved it.

Aldean will be playing that song and many more for a lot of people again this summer, as he embarks on yet another string of arena and stadium dates (including some as co-headliner with Kenny Chesney).

Watch the video above and see why Jason Aldean is nominated for Entertainer of the Year at the 50th annual Academy of Country Music Awards.

The 50th annual ACM Awards air Sunday, April 19 at 8 p.m. EST on CBS.