



KENNY CHESNEY AND JASON ALDEAN WERE COUNTRY'S ODD COUPLE SATURDAY IN DALLAS

Kenny Chesney

With Jason Aldean, Brantley Gilbert, Cole Swindell and Old Dominion

AT&T Stadium, Arlington

Saturday, May 16, 2015

As Jason Aldean stood on the AT&T Stadium stage Saturday night, he reminded the crowd of his earlier days playing at a much smaller Dallas venue: Gilley's. "It was great to see all 15 of y'all there," he said, with a laugh.

He's come a ways since then. About one month ago, Aldean accepted the ACM Male Vocalist of the Year award on the same AT&T Stadium stage. Saturday night, he stood there again, performing to thousands and thousands of country music fans.

Aldean was back this time to open for Kenny Chesney, which felt odd. While Aldean probably couldn't sell out JerryWorld on his own, he certainly could sell out Gexa Energy Pavilion or Verizon Theatre. As Aldean played hits like "Big Green Tractor" and "The Truth," concertgoers settled into their seats, ate their nachos and bought their beer. The sun had barely set when Aldean wrapped up his set with "She's Country."

The pairing of Aldean and Chesney also felt odd because they are on opposite ends of the country music spectrum. Aldean is heavy on the electric guitar — very rock 'n' roll and very "Let's ride in our truck and smoke cigarettes." Chesney, on the other hand, is, "Let's go to the beach and drink a margarita." Aldean and Brantley Gilbert (also an opener that night)? Yes. Chesney and the Zac Brown Band? Yes. Aldean and Chesney? Eh.

They also come from different generations of country music. Aldean came onto the scene around 2005 — about the same time as Taylor Swift and Lady Antebellum.

Chesney, however, released his ninth album in 2005, which featured hit songs "Living in Fast Forward" and "Summertime." Country music fans typically love

and accept all, though. The teenaged girls in front of me knew most Chesney songs and the couple in about their '50s next to me tapped their toes to Aldean.

At 9 p.m., Chesney, who raked in \$44 million last year according to Forbes, began his set. Chesney has eight Entertainer of the Year titles between the Country Music Association and Academy of Country Music and it's fairly easy to see why. He puts on a hell of a show. He made his grand appearance via a flying chair from the middle of the stadium to the stage. He did that thing where he pulled up his jeans and crouched down to really get into the music. He wore his signature cowboy hat to cover up his bald head. And then switched to a ball cap to shake things up.

Chesney didn't spare any effort, either. His sleeveless shirt was completely soaked with sweat by the fifth song. He danced. He ran all over the stage. He picked up two little girls from the audience and paraded them around. He brought Cowboys player Jason Witten out and paraded him around, too. He sang his encore "She Thinks My Tractor's Sexy" with Aldean. People ate it all up (and digested it with a ton of beer).

But really it wouldn't have mattered what Chesney did on stage. The beauty of Chesney is he plays all of his biggest hits and people sing and dance along. Think giant karaoke bar. They aren't there expecting him to do anything differently than his last 400 tours. They just want to hear him sing "Big Star." However, he did not sing that 2003 single, but the crowd was way too drunk to notice or care.

He did, however, sing the carefree "No Shoes, No Shirt, No Problems." During the song, a middle-aged woman behind me flashed her husband. And by flashed, she lifted up her top shirt to reveal her tank top underneath.

That could have been the flashiest part of the show. During Aldean's set, the screen behind him looked similar to a Windows 2007 screensaver. Fireworks were set off during his finale, but there were not a lot of gimmicks. Chesney pretty much relied solely on the music. He's more of a no-thrill, let's-just-sing kind of guy. When it came to duets, Chesney sang "You and Tequila," a duet recorded with Grace Potter, alone. There was no hologram, no music video playing; just Chesney, his guitar and the band. As for Aldean's "Don't You Wanna Stay," a duet with Kelly Clarkson, it was skipped completely.

Chesney isn't slowing down, though. His energy never wavered throughout the hour-and-a-half set. As long as he continues touring, and crouching in tight jeans, fans will continue filling up stadiums.