

# Jason Aldean Gets Another Breakthrough With "She's Country"

Singer Releases *Wide Open*, Recalls a False Start in Early Career

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The first thing you usually hear in Jason Aldean's music is a big and crunchy guitar riff, and that attitude-driven approach is no coincidence.

"I've always said this: You've gotta capture somebody's attention quick," he says. "I'm as ADD as it gets. If something doesn't catch my attention right up front, even in the car listening to the radio, I'll change the channel. You've gotta grab them. Whether it's the guitar riff, whether it's the lyrics or whatever it may be, you've gotta get that attention right up front. And once you do that, you've gotta be able to deliver on the rest of the song."

His new album, *Wide Open*, will debut at No. 2 this week on *Billboard's* country albums chart. It's a particularly impressive achievement considering that the new Rascal Flatts album, released on the same day, is debuting at No. 1.

Aldean is now capitalizing on the momentum of his latest hit, "She's Country," by opening a few shows with Keith Urban, as well as releasing a live concert DVD later this year. In a recent interview with CMT.com, the Georgia native talks about baling hay, breaking through and not believing everything he reads.

**CMT: There's a lot of rural imagery in the new songs, like "Fast" and "Big Green Tractor." Did you grow up knowing a lot of farmers, or did you go to school with farm kids?**

**Aldean:** I grew up on the outskirts of Macon, Ga., and there's a lot of farmland out there. I had a cousin that had about a 300-acre farm, and I used to go out and help him bale hay and do all that kind of stuff. My uncle was a farmer, and I spent a lot of time out there with them. My mama used to work for the Farmers Home Administration when I was younger, so I grew up around that stuff. I didn't necessarily grow up on a farm myself and do it for a living, but I grew up around it a lot. I feel like I can sing about it and tell a story about it and it's believable.

**"Crazy Town" is about making it in Nashville. In reality, how hard is it to get a break in this town?**

I think it's hard to get a good break in town, you know what I mean? There are a ton of yahoos in this town that say, "Oh, I'm friends with such-and-such, and they know such-and-such," which may buy you a pot of coffee in this town. The people who can really help you out and get something done ... I think those breaks are really rare. At the same time, you just never know. You get out and play, and maybe that one time, this guy knows this guy, and he's the one that can help you. It's just really tough. It's not an easy business to get into. People in their 30s will come up and say, "Hey, I want to be a singer," and I'm like, "You probably should have started when you were a teenager." It's tough. It takes a long time, and it's not something that happens overnight. It's something that you have to work on and get better. Anybody who starts being a singer, they're never good when they start. I don't care who you are. It takes time to learn how to do what it is that you do.

**Did you know anybody who got scammed, where they had to pay to get their music promoted?**

(raises his hand) Well, me. There was a guy here in town one time. ... I came to town, and he wanted me to do a showcase for some labels. We paid for the showcase, and he supposedly got all these people out to the show and all that, and I didn't get a deal out of it. This was still when I was living in Georgia, so he came back and wanted us to pay him for getting those people to the shows and all this kind of stuff. You know, they're snakes, and everybody's looking to make a dollar. I had my lawyer write him a letter, and I never heard from the guy again. It's things like that when you have to be careful because it's hard to find somebody who really wants to help you. Most everybody wants something out of the deal. They're not doing it because they want to see you succeed. They're doing it because they want you to succeed because they want something out of the deal, and that's where you've gotta be careful.

**Is it a good rule of thumb that you shouldn't have to pay anybody in advance when you're getting started?**

I would say yeah. I would say that, and I would say that you should never have to sign a management contract with anybody. Verbal. If verbal ain't good enough, then find somebody else.

**In the studio, what's your approach to get your sound just the way you want it?**

Bringing my band in the studio really makes my stuff sound different. These guys aren't the type of guys that say, "Well, this is how you're supposed to play music. This is the rule. This is how it goes." It's trial and error. We may do something that sucks, or we may try something that blows up and it's incredible. That's part of music. You have to experiment with it.

**Has anybody ever suggested to you that you're too country?**

That I'm too country? Hell, no! If anything, they say I'm too rock. I get that a lot of times, especially with "Hicktown" and "She's Country." People say, "That's not really country." Well, it's my version of it.

**Who tells you that?**

I read stuff. I'm a computer dude, so I like to know what everybody's saying and what's going on. I hear people that come out and review our shows and read that stuff in the papers. It's like anybody—they either love it or they hate it. And the people that hate it, I don't really care. I play for the people that like it.