

ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH

Aldean takes audience from rocking to slow-burning

By Daniel Durchholz Special to the Post-Dispatch Jul 23, 2016 🗨️ (0)

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“If you’ve ever been out to one of our shows in the past, you probably already know I’m not a guy who’s gonna stand up here and do a lot of talking,” he said early in the proceedings. “I know you guys came to hear some music, and that’s what we intend to do.”

With that, the reigning ACM Entertainer of the Year was off and charging through an expedient 80-minute set, nearly every song a Top 10 hit, and a handful of them No. 1s, before a crowd of 18,000.

Aldean did stop long enough to address the sweltering heat and joke that he knew everyone had been “doing the right thing, staying hydrated out in the parking lot.

“It’s hot as hell,” he added. “We might all be passing out. But it’s all right, it’ll be a lot of fun.”

Aldean kicked things off with “Just Getting’ Started” and “Gonna Know We Were Here” from his chart-topping 2014 album “Old Boots, New Dirt.” His five-piece band provided crunching, hard-rock guitars and enough steel guitar to keep things country, but beats that occasionally suggested an expansiveness that colored outside the lines.

All six of Aldean’s albums were represented at one time or another, as tempos shifted from the rocking “Take a Little Ride” and the bouncing “When She Says Baby” to sing-along ballad “Night Train” and the slow-burning “Tonight Looks Good on You.”

Noting that his new album, “They Don’t Know,” will be released on Sept. 9, Aldean said that he wanted the first single to be “a song that says thank you to you guys who allow us to do this every night.” The resulting song, “Lights Come On,” he said, reflected the fact that “I like country music, but I also like a little rock and roll.”

He also played the newest single from the album, the mid-tempo “A Little More Summertime.”

After that, Aldean vowed to “put the hammer down and crank things up,” adding some hard-rock/hick-hop flavor to “The Only Way I Know” and “Dirt Road Anthem.” Opening act Thomas Rhett returned to help out on “1994.”

After closing the set with the thumping “Hicktown,” Aldean returned to encore with the simmering “Burnin’ It Down” and the full-tilt “Crazy Town.”

Rhett, a fast-rising star, reached far outside the confines of country music during his set, covering Mark Ronson’s “Uptown Funk” and playing his own “Vacation,” which is reminiscent enough of War’s 1975 hit “Low Rider” that he gave that song’s writers and producer credit on it.

But Rhett also stepped back and played a solo acoustic version of “Round Here,” the hit he wrote for Florida Georgia Line.

Southern rockers A Thousand Horses also performed, and Dee Jay Silver spun records between sets.