

# The Boston Globe

Jason Aldean brings the country gold back to Fenway

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Country superstar Jason Aldean returns to Fenway Park for a two-night stand this Friday and Saturday (Sept. 9 and 10), a sequel of sorts to his 2013 sell-out run on Yawkey Way. Friday also marks the release of the Macon, Ga., native's seventh studio album, "They Don't Know."

Packed with stadium-size songs and arena-ready hooks, "They Don't Know" is a collection of disarmingly affable party anthems that balance Middle American imagery and contemporary relationship concerns. The Globe spoke to Aldean recently about baseball, stadium shows, and his workman-like listening habits.

Q. What is it like playing in a historic venue like Fenway?

A. Music aside, I'm a huge sports fan and in particular a huge baseball fan, so for me to go in and play somewhere like that — I mean, I never in a million years thought that my stage would be set up in center field at Fenway Park. It's pretty unbelievable, man.

I think anytime you get a chance to do any of those stadiums it's a pretty cool thing, but when you get to do one that's that old and has that much history, there's something pretty special about it. A couple of guys in the band are lifelong Red Sox fans, so it's really cool to go there. It's just a fun night.

Q. From the standpoint of an artist is there a difference between performing in a baseball stadium versus a football stadium?

A. To me a stadium's a stadium, you know what I mean? Me being probably a bigger baseball fan, I would almost rather play at baseball stadiums, which is honestly why we started doing that, is why we play more baseball stadiums than we did football stadiums. . . . I think it's just the vibe of walking out and you seeing a stadium full of people at your show is what's cool. Whether it's a football stadium or baseball stadium or soccer stadiums that we play, it's just the overall vibe of it. There's nothing else like that.

Q. What was your first stadium show?

A. The first time I went to a stadium it was to see George Strait. It was George Strait, I think it was called the Straitland Festival, something like that. It was Strait and [Tim] McGraw, Kenny Chesney, and Faith Hill. He had a ton [of artists], it was an all day thing at Turner Field in Atlanta.

Q. What's on the stereo in the tour bus these days?

A. I have a tendency to always go back and listen to all my older stuff that I have. I'll still play some Mellencamp, Bob Seger, things like that. I'll listen to the radio some to hear what's going on currently, but more times than not, man, I'm listening to songs for our next project.

This album hasn't even come out yet and I've already got my producers sending me songs for the next album. I find myself listening more to songs like that and just trying to figure out what we're going to play. I'm also in the process of producing Tyler Farr's album, so I'm listening to songs for his album and trying to find songs for him. I spend more time than not listening to songs that way.

It's a little like trying to find a needle in a haystack, man. You listen to tons of songs, hundreds of songs to find the 10 or 15 that end up going on the album, so you have to weed through all the songs to really find the ones that end up making the album, or the ones that you feel like are worthy of making the record. It's a process for sure. Now doing it for my album, it's hard enough, and now I'm doing it for two albums, my album and for Tyler's, so it's doubly tough now.

Q. What's the most rewarding part about finally finding those 10 or 15 songs?

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I think the most rewarding thing is when the album finally comes out and people have a chance to hear it, and you watch one of those songs that you found go from obscurity that nobody's ever heard of, to getting in the studio recording it, and then watching it go up the chart and become a hit. Then you go out live and you see everybody singing it, everybody. It's like you gambled on something and you won. It's like doubling down on a bet and you winning the bet. It's a good feeling. Every time you put out a single it's a little bit of a roll of the dice, but when it works out, becomes a hit, that's the payoff.