



(9/7): <http://www.newsday.com/entertainment/music/they-don-t-know-review-jason-aldean-mixes-his-roots-with-rock-1.12281631>

'They Don't Know' review: Jason Aldean mixes his roots with rock

**BOTTOM LINE** Country's reigning Entertainer of the Year shows why he holds the title

Jason Aldean has never been shy about showing off his rock and roll side, especially when he's using it to declare that "She's Country." To open his seventh album "They Don't Know" (Broken Bow Records), Aldean rocks out again with "Lights Come On," a strutting slice of Def Leppard-drenched rock featuring a guitar attack that sounds like he and the band are going to bust out Beastie Boys' "Sabotage" at any moment. It's no wonder the song, written by Tyler Hubbard and Brian Kelley of Florida Georgia Line, has already stomped its way to the top of the country charts.

Aldean's wheelhouse, though, has drifted over the years to traditional country. And it's a pure pleasure to hear him hammer out of the park these well-crafted stories of near-relationships and workin'-for-the-weekend folks. The wistful "In Case You Don't Remember," where he recalls a spring break fling that meant more to him than it did to her, captures an ache that sets Aldean apart from so many of today's country bros. The lovely "This Plane Don't Go There" is the kind of bittersweet country ballad that Kenny Chesney used to build his early career, while "All Out of Beer" brings back the charm of straightforward '80s rock and mixes it with enough of today's country cool to create what should be another multigenerational smash.

The tender duet "First Time Again" with Kelsea Ballerini fits into the same pop crossover mold as his duet with Kelly Clarkson, "Don't You Wanna Stay," which introduced Aldean to a whole new audience. As much as Aldean tries to keep his rocking side front and center, his creativity lies elsewhere. "They Don't Know" opens with the rocking "Lights Come On," but it closes with the more country-leaning "When the Lights Go Out," perhaps a sign of where Aldean is really headed.