



Jason Aldean brings the hits (and the heat) to Toronto 3

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Country singer Jason Aldean is blazing a country road the likes Keith Urban and Tim McGraw did about a decade ago.

The latest country sensation — who paid his dues opening for both McGraw and Urban over the years — made a celebratory pit stop at Toronto's Molson Canadian Amphitheatre Thursday night before a near-capacity horde of beer-swilling, plaid-heavy, denim-clad fans. It's also fitting that he's striking while the iron is extremely hot with his current Burn It Down tour.

Aldean used plenty of pyrotechnics and fireballs to open and close the 19-song main set but relied on a feverish pace that left little but hit single after hit single. The only stage props came during Hicktown, which launched the 85-minute show

with Aldean hovering high above the crowd before quickly coming back down to earth.

With a slew of singles over 10 years and six studio albums, Aldean and his five-piece band veered through several country songs that have more in common with Big & Rich and Rascal Flatts than Johnny Cash or Hank Williams Sr. Aldean referred to “The Man In Black” during Johnny Cash as images of the legend emerged on the screen.

Generally the singer used a pop rock format to get his tunes across whether it was on Amarillo Sky or When She Says Baby. When he doled out more traditional country-leaning sounds, as was the case with Big Green Tractor or the powerful Fly Over States, Aldean soared far easier.

Of course that's not to say everything was sonic gold. A handful of times the singer used a rap-fuelled delivery on tracks including Take A Little Ride and The Only Way I Know (which had openers Cole Swindell and Tyler Farr onstage) that left a lot to be desired. Meanwhile Burnin' It Down also seemed to fall flat despite Aldean mentioning how he thought it would be a hit.

The musician, who shook hands and made the most of the T-shaped stage jutting out onto the floor, changed the lyrics of Fly Over States to include “Toronto, Canada.” His biggest Canadian surprise was a cover of Bryan Adams' Summer Of '69 which Aldean nailed and the crowd loved. Judging by other shows, it wasn't a song he just pulled out for Toronto.

Fans rarely left their feet even during slower numbers such as Tonight Looks Good On You. They were rewarded during a few lulls in the show with nuggets such as Just Gettin' Started and Gonna Know We Were Here, both off his 2014 album Old Boots, New Dirt.

Near the end Aldean said he didn't care what kind of label his music was given as his fans know it's “our kind of country.” They loved it from start to finish as the bruising Crazy Town and She's Country proved Aldean is moving up the rung of country superstars.