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'Open' mind: JASON ALDEAN

COUNTRY BY KEN TUCKER

Full Speed Ahead

Jason Aldean Will Follow Third Album With Live DVD

Country rocker Jason Aldean is running full throttle. "The world's wide open and the possibilities are endless," says Aldean, whose appropriately titled third album, "Wide Open," is due April 7 on the Nashville independent Broken Bow.

The first single, "She's Country" (No. 13 on Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart after 16 weeks), is Aldean's fastest-rising single. The track has streamed 12.9 million times on his MySpace page.

Aldean, who topped the bill on last fall's CMT on Tour, will do a mixture of headlining and support dates in 2009. He opened for Toby Keith earlier this year and will tour with Keith Urban this summer.

"We're going to go out and do our own thing, too," Aldean says. "We had a lot of fun doing that last year."

Spalding Entertainment's Chris Parr, Aldean's day-to-day manager, agrees. "We're going to be capitalizing on Jason's live show," he says. "It's our biggest secret weapon."

Aldean recently filmed a live concert DVD in front of a sellout crowd of 4,600 at the Knoxville (Tenn.) Coliseum. While the DVD will be released later in 2009, the concert will also serve as the basis for a GAC special, "Wide Open," which premieres April 7. Another GAC special, "One on One," featuring conversations and collaborations between Aldean and his musical hero Randy Owen of Alabama, began airing March 11.

Aldean's remake of the Alabama classic "My Home's in Alabama"—featuring his Broken Bow labelmate Owen—will be a bonus track for those who buy his album at Wal-Mart. An acoustic version of Aldean's hit "Amarillo Sky" will be of-

fered to iTunes customers who pre-order the album. Meanwhile, a new track, "The Best of Me," will be available to those who buy Aldean's full album on iTunes.

Aldean will perform at an Academy of Country Music-sponsored concert in Las Vegas prior to the April 5 ACM Awards. He will appear on NBC's "Today" around the release of his album, although a date hasn't yet been set.

Recording has been a learning process, Aldean says. "We didn't even know what we were doing," he says of the first album. "We just found a bunch of songs and cut them."

Aldean's self-titled 2005 debut has sold 1.2 million copies, according to Nielsen SoundScan, while his sophomore 2007 effort, "Relentless," has sold 628,000. The two albums have spawned a total of five top 10 hits, including the 2006 No. 1, "Why."

"Wide Open" was the result of a focused song search. "We really took our time to find songs," Aldean says. Having past hits helped open doors with publishers. "We had great songs on the first two records; we just had to work harder to find them."

While Aldean contributed three songs to his debut album, he didn't write anything for the second. "Things really started popping and I was out on the road and didn't have time to focus," he says. He wrote one song for the new album.

Cindy Spicer, assistant PD/music director for country KUSS San Diego, says "She's Country" has "a lot of energy" and calls Aldean "the real deal, but for today's new country listener."

Scott Lindy, PD at country WUBL (the Bull) Atlanta, says Aldean is country through and through. "He's respectful, quiet at first and never apologizes for being country, whether it's in his music, personal conversations or onstage."

While artists like Taylor Swift and Carrie Underwood have skyrocketed right from the start, Aldean says he's happy with his career path. "We've had a slow, steady pace," he says. "Hopefully that will allow us to hang around for awhile. We're off to a good start."