

COUNTRY'S CUTEST COWBOYS

Behind the Stetsons and steel guitars

WRITERS CHRISTINE FONTANA AND JILL SIERACKI

JASON ALDEAN

HICKTOWN'S HOTTEST NEW STAR



WITH "HICKTOWN" TOPPING the charts, scoring his label's first gold record and a major coast-to-coast tour, it's hard to believe just a few years ago 29-year-old Jason Aldean was ready to hang up his Nashville dream. But even well on the way to major success, this Macon, Georgia native is still a country boy at heart.

PLAYGIRL: It's hard to imagine now that you almost left Nashville...

JASON ALDEAN: Yeah. The summer of 2003, I'd been here for about five years and been turned down by all the labels in town, most of 'em three or four times. I'd gotten married, had a six-month-old baby at home, and priorities were kinda changing—at that point, you get more concerned with buying diapers and baby formula than you do with your music career.

If you hadn't gotten that phone call, what kind of jobs were you looking at?

I had put in for a job at a textile plant. And I used to work for Pepsi, and I was thinkin' of going back there. Who knows? I coulda been pumping gas somewhere.

When was the first time you heard "Hicktown" on the radio?

First time I heard "Hicktown" on the radio, I was driving to a friend's house, it was late, probably 10 or 11 at night. I stopped by Kroger and right when I was getting out of the car, it came on the radio. I shut the door real quick and got back in the car, and I just kinda drove around the parking lot a few times to hear it, and was rockin' out in the parking lot.

When your debut album went gold, what was the first thing you splurged on?

I try to be smart with money; I don't go out and buy crazy things. I just bought a house, but to me, that's an investment, not really so much a splurge.

In your next single "Why," what is it about the lyrics that really spoke to you? It's not necessarily a "love song"; it's about hurting someone's feelings...

I kinda think it's a song that describes the way a lot of people's relationships are. Where they get angry,

they say things they don't mean. Where they push people to the breaking point before they finally realize what they've done and then, y'know, look back on it and go, "Why did I do that? I didn't mean to say that." I think a lot of people can relate to that.

Have you had any crazy fan encounters on the road?

One particular time, I was wearin' a pair of jeans that had a hole in them, kinda in the thigh. And I'm standing out in the front of the stage and some chick put her hand in the hole and ran it, like, almost all the way up my leg. I'm on stage, tryin' to be cool and sing the song and at the same time tryin' to get her hand outta there.

What's the difference between hicktown girls and city girls?

[Laughs] City girls are more high maintenance, I think. They like better stuff. You can take a hicktown girl to Kentucky Fried Chicken and to a movie, and she's a happy camper. A city girl, they want you to go to the opera and stuff that I ain't really into.

This issue comes out just in time for Fan Fair: What are some of your favorite Nashville places?

One of them is a little bar near Nashville called the Tin Roof. That's always a cool little local hangout where you can go see anyone you wanna see in the music business. There's a couple little sushi places that I like to go—imagine that, me likin' sushi, but I do [laughs].



photography Glen Rose

What have been some of your favorite stops on tour?

Dallas, Texas, is one that I really like a lot. It's got some cool nightlife, some cool clubs... Just bein' in Florida I like a lot—[but] the Tampa area was one that kinda sticks out. LA's always cool to go and visit. New York, not really one of my favorites, but [there's] a lot of stuff to see when you're cruisin' around in a cab. You can pretty much see whatever you want to see on the side of the street, so it's pretty interesting. I'll give it that. —Jill Sieracki