

Billboard

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ALBUMS



JASON ALDEAN

Night Train

Producer: Michael Knox

Broken Bow Records

Release Date: Oct. 16

Jason Aldean's last project, *My Kinda*

Party, finished 2011 as the top-selling country album. So naturally, expectations are high for *Night Train*. Luckily, Aldean doesn't derail. Lead single "Take a Little Ride" rocketed to the top of Billboard's Hot Country Songs chart faster than any of his previous efforts, and there's much more for fans to embrace on this sturdy 15-song collection. Opener "This Nothin' Town" is a well-crafted salute to rural America, rich in vivid images of small-town life, and "The Only Way I Know" is a catchy country-rap number featuring Aldean pals Luke Bryan and Eric Church. "Black Tears" (penned by Canaan Smith and Tyler Hubbard) is a somber ballad about a stripper, while "Staring at the Sun" showcases Aldean's distinctive vocals. The set's strength lies in Aldean's penchant for variety, mixing edgy country rockers with poignant ballads. Among the highlights is "1994," a quirky, fun ode to '90s country star Joe Diffie. Leaning on songwriters like Neil Thrasher, Wendell Mobley, Hillary Lindsey, David Lee Murphy and Ben Hayslip, Aldean has assembled another potent album that should keep his successful train rolling.—DEP

The Big Story

Review: All Aboard Jason Aldean's 'Night Train'

By MICHAEL MCCALL — Oct. 16, 2012

Jason Aldean, "Night Train" (Broken Bow)

Jason Aldean blends hard-rock sonics with country music themes better than any of his contemporaries, as he proves once again on his fifth album, "Night Train."

But his multi-platinum success depends just as much on his willingness to break formulas and take chances. Aldean has made every album with producer Michael Knox as well as with his road band backing him in the studio. That symbiotic relationship keeps getting tighter and more ferocious with each outing. It gives Aldean's music an edge lacking in most current Nashville country rockers.

"Night Train" shows how confident the singer is in his crew. There's the fierce guitar squawks set against the arena-rock drum beats in the chorus of "Feel That Again." There's the Zeppelin-style acoustic opening of "Wheels Rollin'," which also features an imaginative guitar solo. And a synthesized carnival sound pops up behind the rocking arrangement of "This Nothin' Town."

No one else in country music is creating music that sounds anything like these songs. That distinct quality runs like a high-watt third rail through "Night Train" — and explains why Aldean has electrified the American heartland with his music.

CHECK OUT THIS TRACK: As much as Aldean has tested the conventions of country music in recent years, nothing comes close to the nerve it took to cut "1994." It's not just the Aerosmith-to-Kid Rock-to-Colt Ford rap rock in the verses, but the hilariously goofy turn he takes in the chorus, which chants the name of a '90s country star: "Joe, Joe, Joe Diffie!"