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## Jason Aldean says owning his records was a priority to him



NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Country star Jason Aldean learned the hard lessons about the music business when he first signed a record deal with Capitol Records that ended up never producing any music. Years later, he signed to Broken Bow, a Nashville-based indie label that has gone on to release all nine of Aldean's records, six of which have been certified platinum or multiplatinum.

"I got kicked around in the music business pretty good early on and learned a lot," said Aldean on the eve of his new record, the appropriately titled "9," which came out Nov. 22. "Broken Bow giving me an opportunity to do what I've done over the years and giving me a chance to have a career means a lot."

Two years ago, the German-based BMG bought BBR Music Group, which includes Broken Bow, and Aldean this year signed a new global distribution and marketing deal with BMG, a big step for Aldean who was already one of country music's most downloaded artists.

In many ways, Aldean has become the face of the label and is invested in its success, which now includes artists like Dustin Lynch, Runaway June, Lindsay Ell, Jimmie Allen, Zac Brown Band, Trace Adkins, Kid Rock and more. Recently named artist of the decade by the Academy of Country Music, he's sold nearly 12 million albums in the U.S. alone, had more than 20 No. 1 singles and filled arenas and stadiums along the way. He also has his own imprint at the label, where he has signed and released music from Tyler Farr.



Now with BMG's support, Aldean and the rest of BBR Music Group's artists have greater access to an international audience for country music that has been growing, said Jon Loba, executive vice president, recorded music at BMG Nashville.

"In the next year, you're going to see some really big picture initiatives specific to Aldean that will not only advance his career overseas, but the genre as a whole," said Loba. "We're trying as a company not to just elevate our artists in other territories, but the entire genre."

"I think that's something every artist would like to have," Aldean said. "It kind of opens you up to a whole new world."

Aldean discussed owning his music, a hot topic in Nashville lately during the public feud between Taylor Swift and Nashville-based Big Machine Label Group, which owns her first six records. The three-time ACM entertainer of the year told The Associated Press that was a priority in his last contract negotiations.

"When I redid my record deal a few records back, when I upped with Broken Bow for the first time, that was a big point for me," Aldean said. "I wanted to own my own stuff. And then when I just re-upped again, I wanted to own more of it."

Loba declined to discuss specifics of Aldean's contract, but acknowledged he was getting strong offers from their competitors.

“We were happy to deliver in this instance on the things that were important to him because he is so incredibly important to us,” Loba said.

“Those are our paintings, you know. That’s our piece of art. And the record companies, I feel like, we both did well. I made these records. They profited a lot off it and got that initial stuff off it,” said Aldean. “At some point, I want that stuff back and to be able to leave to my family.”

But Aldean also feels a loyalty to his label, which has trusted him to be his own A&R guy, essentially picking out his songs and singles with his longtime producer Michael Knox. Luckily, he has other country artists bringing him songs, such as Tyler Hubbard of Florida Georgia Line, who co-wrote his driving, country rock single “We Back.” Morgan Wallen, who is opening for Aldean next year, co-wrote “Keeping It Small Town” and Brantley Gilbert co-wrote “The Same Way,” both songs that Aldean felt fit his style of arena country rock.

“I feel like whenever we go into the studio and start recording, it’s almost like a lot of these guys start writing specifically for us, for our record, which is cool,” Aldean said.

Even as the music industry moves more and more to a singles-driven approach, Aldean still sees the value in a full 16-song album.

“I feel like it’s really hard for a fan to get an idea of who an artist is by listening to one song every few months,” Aldean said.

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