

CHARLIE

CRB LIFETIME ACHIEVEMENT AWARD



DANIELS

A Country Original

The only label Charlie Daniels will apply to his life's work is "CDB Music." And even a cursory look at his career makes it easy to understand why. The rural North Carolina radio he was raised on featured local stations playing different music formats depending on the time of day. He's worked with everyone from Bob Dylan to the Beatles, and seen more of the world than most can imagine. Although Daniels remains one of the most versatile artists performing today, he still calls country music home. And that love shines through with unchecked excitement when he speaks of his recent induction into the Grand Ole Opry.

I am a child of radio. I didn't watch TV until I was 15 years old, so I grew up with radio. Usually in the small towns and rural areas there would only be one radio station and they were not formatted at the time for one particular kind of programming. I got to hear a lot of music, and then watched as radio grew into a business that was pretty strictly formatted. There are enough stations now that they can play one genre of music and service the community. I don't think anybody had the idea it would grow into what it has grown into, especially with the advent of television. That was suppose to be detrimental to radio, but radio is still there, always will be.

Growing up our last name was Daniel, not Daniels. My dad worked for several different companies in different locations and I went to a lot of different schools. It's kind of natural to just put an "S" on it, and between paymasters and school people we finally said, "Okay, our name is Daniels." My dad is buried in a family graveyard in North Carolina, and he's the only one in the cemetery with an "S."

Something weird happened the other day. I don't know why I was looking at my birth certificate, but believe it or not, the people who filled it out put "Daniels" on there, too. From the day I was born I didn't have a chance. I was going to be Charlie Daniels.

The Grand Ole Opry might as well have been Mars as far as I was concerned when I was a kid growing up in North Carolina. It's not a place I ever thought I would go to and observe, much less stand on the stage and play. It's a dream that has stayed with me many years, and God has blessed me with this induction.

When we started kicking up some nuggets we were a little on the hard side. I hesitate to say rock because I don't know if we play rock music. I don't know what we play, but it was a little wild for the Opry. Through the years the sounds on the Opry have changed. Saturday night you will hear things you wouldn't have heard 30 years ago. There were a lot of people that went to bat for us to be inducted. Maybe they were afraid we wouldn't be able to fulfill our quota of shows. We are a real hard-working band, but we're already making plans to play when we're in town.

I still have a great relationship with radio. I do interviews before we go into an area to do a show. What has changed in my relationship with radio over the years is that now I can't go to a station and get a record added anymore. It's harder now for a local guy to add a record because they don't have the power to do it. There's someone sitting somewhere else that makes a lot of those decisions. But people at the local stations are always happy to talk with me. I can always talk with you about music.

Watching a record grow is one of the most fascinating things I've ever done. I remember when *Fire On The Mountain* came out. We started out going to stations on the East Coast to promote the album and we really felt the energy

rise as we crossed the country – going all the way to the West Coast and making stops along the way. We'd stop in at a station and find out they were having success with some cuts. The album started to get noticed and before long was beginning to sell.



Long Time Coming: Charlie Daniels (second from left) celebrates his Opry induction with (l-r) Manager/Blue Hat Records Pres. David Corlew, Opry members Marty Stuart and Connie Smith, Opry VP/GM Pete Fisher and Gaylord Ent. SVP Steve Buchanan.

"The Devil Went Down To Georgia" really surprised me. If you had told me when we recorded it in 1979 that it was going to be on a popular game called *Guitar Hero* in 2008, I'd have had a hard time believing it. I thought it would do well, but I had no idea it would be an international hit. And it's a song that transcends generations because it's easy to understand. The story is timeless, not something specific to one generation. I haven't heard the version on *Guitar Hero* yet, but people have told me about it.

Radio has been very good to me over the years. We have had somewhere in the neighborhood of 20 million records sold, and I can't knock that. Radio has changed over the years quite a bit and I understand that radio is in the business to make money. They play the music that makes them money. I totally understand that, but I don't necessarily agree with how that affects music. When it comes down to it, everyone is playing the same thing. They are all vying for one half-point in the book to get above everybody else. I've always strived to sound different from everybody else, so if I ran a radio station I would want to make it sound different. I'd take a winger on a new record by a new artist and try to beat somebody else to break a record. There is no pride in breaking a record anymore. And if a new record isn't working, they'll take it off after a few weeks. There is very little commitment.

There are niches out there that have not been filled. If you want to see the proof, look at satellite radio – they have everything in the world. I know local radio doesn't want to talk about satellite radio, but I think local radio stations that sound like local radio stations shouldn't be worried. They are supposed to service their community and play what those local people want to hear. Satellite radio won't kill local radio, but it might force radio back to sounding like a local station. I have a deep and abiding love for Country radio, I'd just like to see local stations come back and announce the Friday night football scores and take on the flavor of the community.