



Never Look at the Empty Seats: A Memoir

Charlie Daniels

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The Incredible Story of a Country Music Legend

Few artists have left a more indelible mark on America's musical landscape than Charlie Daniels.

Readers will experience a soft, personal side of Charlie Daniels that has never before been documented. In his own words, he presents the path from his post-depression childhood to performing for millions as one of the most successful country acts of all time and what he has learned along the way. The book also includes insights into the many musicians that orbited Charlie's world, including Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Tammy Wynette and many more.

Charlie was officially inducted into The Country Music Hall of Fame in 2016, shortly before his 80th birthday. He now shares the inside stories, reflections, and rare personal photographs from his earliest days in the 1940s to his self-taught guitar and fiddle playing high school days of the fifties through his rise to music stardom in the seventies, eighties and beyond.

Charlie Daniels presents a life lesson for all of us regardless of profession:

“Walk on stage with a positive attitude. Your troubles are your own and are not included in the ticket price. Some nights you have more to give than others, but put it all out there every show. You're concerned with the people who showed up, not the ones who didn't. So give them a show and...Never look at the empty seats!”

Never Look at the Empty Seats: A Memoir Details

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From Reader Review Never Look at the Empty Seats: A Memoir for online ebook

Holly says

Never Look at the Empty Seats (Charlie Daniels)

Few artists have left a more indelible mark on America's musical landscape than Charlie Daniels. Readers will experience a soft, personal side of Charlie Daniels that has never before been documented. In his own words, he presents the path from his post-depression childhood to performing for millions as one of the most successful country acts of all time and what he has learned along the way. The book also includes insights into the many musicians that orbited Charlie's world, including Elvis Presley, Bob Dylan, Willie Nelson, Tammy Wynette and many more. Charlie was officially inducted into The Country Music Hall of Fame in 2016, shortly before his 80th birthday. He now shares the inside stories, reflections, and rare personal photographs from his earliest days in the 1940s to his self-taught guitar and fiddle playing high school days of the fifties through his rise to music stardom in the seventies, eighties and beyond. Charlie Daniels presents a life lesson for all of us regardless of profession: "Walk on stage with a positive attitude. Your troubles are your own and are not included in the ticket price. Some nights you have more to give than others, but put it all out there every show. You're concerned with the people who showed up, not the ones who didn't. So give them a show and...Never look at the empty seats!"

This book is full of all sorts of facts about Charlie Daniels (like - did you know that's not supposed to be his name?), as well as his perspective on all that life has thrown his way. It's part memoir and biography, part inspirational, and all authentic. Written as a collection of stories (smashed into chapters), this feels more like a conversation with the artist than an actual book. It covers the history of Southern Rock, how the music industry works, some of his music career (although I really would have liked to have seen more about the inner workings and behind-the-scenes of his band and stage life), and the trials and tribulations that he overcame to get where he is today. It's actually pretty fascinating. My biggest "complaint" about the book is knowing that there are many omitted parts -- it was a rock band in the 70s, and we know they weren't angels, so I'm not sure why they tried to gloss over those parts that could lend even more authenticity to the story.

Jason X says

This is a decent, readable memoir from an interesting character and talented southern rock and country musician that any fan would enjoy.

The best parts are when Charlie shares details from his career, the people he met, the songs he wrote, the wisdom he gained, and his personal struggles and successes.

The worst parts were when he gave his interpretation of the Bible, his thoughts on the middle east, and his political opinions. It's not necessarily that I disagree, or don't want him to express his faith, it was neither interesting nor enlightening to read.

Charlie should have opened up with more details or stories from his life and the people around him. For example, the part when he went to Mexico is the direction he should have gone. The story of his father speaking up for a mistreated black coworker was enlightening. Instead Daniels tells a fairly white-washed

version of his life with a recitation of musicians that came and went in his band over the years. Reading names of people without anything substantial is the equivalent of movie credits. Charlie is proud of his outspokenness and honesty about his opinions, which is fine, but I wish he'd have been more open and honest about his life.

I really liked that CD credited one of his High School teachers for instilling a life-long love of literature.

Thanks to my wife for gifting me this autographed copy.

Koren says

I really think you have to be a big fan of Charlie Daniels' music to really like this book. There were elements of this book I really liked and started off thinking this was going to be a great book. The beginning when he talks about his childhood were the best but after that it was way too detailed about his music career and very little personal information, or maybe there is not that much to tell and his life really has been as blessed as he says it is. He spends way too much time telling us about which band members came and left and why but usually doesn't go into personal detail about them. If you aren't familiar with them you probably won't care who came and went from the band. Charlie admits in his biography that he barely graduated high school and isn't really an author and it shows here. Perhaps an bio would have been better than a autobio.

Dave says

Never Look at the Empty Seats is Charlie Daniels' excellent autobiography, tracing his long life from his beginnings in a small Southern town where everyone gathered around in a neighbor's living room to catch one and only channel available on the tv to his induction into the Country Music Hall of Fame. Along the way, in addition to tracing his musical career and family life, he walks the reader through varied events of the late Twentieth Century from Pearl Harbor to Jim Crow to the Vietnam War.

What really makes this book sing is Daniels' writing talent. He speaks with an easy voice to listen to and has a real down-to-earth philosophy. Before reading this book, I knew very little of Daniels' life or even his music -other than his awesome hit Devil Went Down to Georgia and his Soapbox commentary on social and political issues, which is so well written that it proves you don't need a college education to be a great thinker.

Nevertheless, I found this book to be, not only well-written, but fascinating on many different levels. It is primarily about the musical career of Daniels. He touches briefly on his faith and on his views of current events.

Now that I have learned all about Daniels' lengthy career, I look forward to actually listening to some of his music.

Thank you to Thomas Nelson publishing for this advance copy of the book.

Tiffany Jones says

****FTC DISCLAIMER: I RECEIVED AN E-ARC FROM NETGALLEY IN EXCHANGE FOR AN HONEST REVIEW. RECEIPT OF THIS BOOK IN THIS MANNER DOES NOT AFFECT MY OPINION OF THE BOOK OR THE CONTENT OF MY REVIEW.****

Few artists have left as indelible a mark on America's music world as Charlie Daniels has. Few have achieved his level of success, much less managed to stay there for as long as he has. Through his memoir, Charlie allows his fans to see a different side of him, to get to know his story, in his own words. He takes us all the way from his post-depression childhood to performing for millions of screaming fans as one of the most successful country music acts of all time, all the while sharing insights from what he's learned along the way. He also gives his own observations of the artists who crossed his path over the years, artists like Lynard Skynard, The Marshall Tucker Band, Elvis, Tammy Wynette, Willie Nelson, and many more. Charlie also includes a life lesson for us all, regardless of our profession: "Walk on stage with a positive attitude. Your troubles are your own and are not included in the ticket price. Some nights you have more to give than others, but put it all out there for every show. You're concerned with the people who showed up, not the ones who didn't. So give them a show and...Never look at the empty seats."

I've always been a big fan of Charlie Daniels so when I got approved to review his memoir, I was really excited. He definitely didn't disappoint! Charlie was insightful and interesting. He has a real talent for writing and manages to tell his stories in a way that makes you almost feel like you were there. I really enjoyed reading about touring with his bands and his stories about working with other artists. I've always enjoyed his music so it was interesting getting more insight into who he is as a person. I particularly love how seamlessly Charlie weaves his faith into his story. You can tell that it's just a part of who he is, it's impossible to separate from him because his faith affects every choice he makes. Is he perfect? No, but he never claims to be. He does an amazing job at explaining how Christ wants us to come to Him, as we are now, we don't have to wait until we're "good enough", because salvation is something that we'd never be able to earn on our own. Charlie gives a wonderful explanation of how faith in Jesus is the only way.

He does also touch some on his political beliefs, which some people may not like, because he is conservative. But, it's another area that I truly respect him in because Charlie obviously does his "homework" and stays informed. Even if you aren't politically conservative, there is so much in his book that you'll enjoy. So, don't let that one area derail you and cause you to miss out on what is truly an enjoyable experience.

Kristin says

Note: Kristin reads and reviews both Christian and secular fiction on A Simply Enchanted Life . Out of respect for my readers, I am including a content review. This content review will help you decide whether this book is suitable for you.

Content Review:

Christian or Secular : Christian

Profanity: Some (S-O-B and Damn)

Sex&Violence : None

Trigger Warnings : None

Disclosure: As mentioned, this book does have two curse words—once each. Having said that, all of us are at different points. Most importantly, Charlie Daniels gave one of the best salvation testimonies that I've read in a memoir. Some people struggle with grasping the simplicity but Charlie does a good job explaining what you come to Christ as you are. Some will take offense with conservative political views that Charlie is very vocal about. Bars and drinking is also mentioned throughout the book as well as alcoholism.

I'm going to admit, I didn't know much about Charlie Daniels. I've heard about him my whole life. My dad is a big fan but I've never much liked the kind of music that my Dad likes. So, I pretty much assumed I probably wouldn't care for Charlie Daniels. Silly, huh?

Well, I saw this book and I've discovered a recent love for memoirs. I figured that whether or not I liked his music—I might like his book. Plus, my daughters play classical violin and fiddle tunes so I thought this book would be a good choice as any.

I didn't quite know what to expect but I was blown away by Charlie's eloquence and way with words. In addition to being a fine musician, he is a natural storyteller. From start to finish, this book kept my attention. I'm very impressed.

Now, let's talk about a few "negative" things that some Christians may throw out there. I know some that would object the use of any foul language in a book. Most of the time I agree but when it comes to memoir, I think they follow a different set of rules. I urge people to please remember that we all come from different walks of life and no one is perfect. God's still working on us—all of us. If you put this book down because you're offended, you may miss something profound.

One only needs to read to Charlie's testimony to see how God touched his heart. God is explored as a loving father who wants each of us to come to Him as we are. This is something my daughter grapples with. She thinks that she has to do something while really she just has to let go and let God. I really think she would benefit from reading Charlie's testimony—as would anyone struggling with this. This is one of the best discussions about salvation that I've ever read in a memoir. Charlie presents a simple and easy to understand plan of salvation.

Politically, Charlie makes no apologies for what he believes—yes, he is conservative and some will take offense. I warn about this because some people just don't handle political discussion well. So, take caution that this book does delve into the political arena.

This book has so many facts about Charlie's life, his journey, and his tenacity. I felt inspired by his determination and his will to make life what he wanted. Such a powerful story of triumph!

Oh, and I have listened to his music since reading this book. Daddy wasn't wrong, Charlie is a doggone good fiddler. Just don't tell my daddy I said so. He'll never stop with the, "I told you so."

A complimentary copy of this book was provided by BookLook Bloggers. I was not required to write a positive review, and have not been compensated for this. All opinions are my own.

This review was originally posted on A Simply Enchanted Life

Mark Wheeler says

Charlie Daniels was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame in 2016, shortly before his eightieth birthday. In this memoir, Charlie shares his story from growing up in North Carolina in the late 1930's and 1940's to becoming a self-taught guitar, mandolin, and fiddle player. He describes the people who mentored him and help him grow as a person, musician, and performer. He also shares some personal photographs during different eras of his life.

Three-fourths of the book describe his personal, musical, and professional journey. The remainder of the book shares his faith journey, including a clear presentation of the gospel, his non-politically correct thoughts on issues of the day, and his induction into the Grand Ole Opry and the Country Music Hall of Fame.

The book is not flashy or a literary masterpiece. Instead, it is a plain-spoken, heartfelt reflection on one man's journey and the people who helped him make it. I found it to be insightful and encouraging.

While I am not a musician, I am a performer of a different sort as a pastor. Consequently, I found one of his life lessons to be extremely encouraging and helpful.

One of life's most important lessons I've learned, as it relates to the path I've chosen, is like the old song says, "accentuate the positive; eliminate the negative."

Walk onstage with a positive attitude. Your troubles are your own and are not included in the ticket price.

Some nights you have more to give than others, but put it all out there every show.

You're concerned with the people who showed up, not the ones who didn't. So always give them a show, and never look at the empty seats.

Disclosure of Material Connection: I received this book free from the publisher through the BookLook Bloggers book review bloggers program. I was not required to write a positive review. The opinions I have expressed are my own.

Ash Wilson says

I have tremendous respect for Charlie Daniels as an entertainer. Especially now, to still be doing what he's doing with such high energy in his 80s is pretty remarkable and no easy task. I think a lot of that is credit to his strong work ethic and lifelong passion for music, which is clearly evident throughout the book. Although I've never personally gotten to see him live before, I've seen videos and heard stories and I do believe that he is a top-notch performer.

I would say that I'm a mild CDB fan. I know their greatest hits and own a few of their albums, but going into this book, I had very little to no knowledge at all about their history, discography, etc.

It's no secret if you know Charlie Daniels' music pretty much at all, that he's a very strongly opinionated man and very open about it, no punches spared. There's also a, (for lack of a better word), arrogance that I

read into that during this book, which, when I agreed with him, I loved, and when I disagreed with him ... not so much. At least it can be said that either way, he is who he is and that's just who he is, right?

I heard / read so many spectacular reviews of it going in, that I almost felt a little let-down - but the book read a little slow for me. I'm not sure if was because of the format, which he was honest about right off the bat at the beginning of the book when he said that there would be no chronological order to it or anything at all, just the order his memories came up and out in. Which I guess was more real as storytelling recollections go, but the jumpy-ness was a little strange for me and made his writing repetitive.

I agreed with him on some political points. LOVED his pro-military message and all the things he has done for the troops over the years! His friendship with Louis L'Amour was beautiful to read about. And I learned things, such as the CDB connections with the Allman Brothers Band, Marshall Tucker Band, and Lynyrd Skynyrd, (with the bittersweet Ronnie Van Zant tribute). I learned that Charlie co-wrote "It Hurts Me", the Elvis Presley song, which Trisha Yearwood actually did a beautiful cover of when he was inducted into the Country Music Hall of Fame a few years back. (Also, he mentioned Garth Brooks in a positive light a few times during the book and even included a picture with him in the photograph pages. That'll score anyone a few extra points with me!)

I disagreed with him on some political points. He went a little overboard on the religious preaching for my taste as well, but I understand the place that that all came from. I felt some of his stories / wording sounded like bragging / tooting his own horn, which I never care for in anyone.

And there was this really odd feeling for me in reading this book in that he credits the CDB band, crew, and staff in great length and talks about them all name for name throughout what felt like half of the book - yet also he's gone through more band members (by them choosing to leave or him firing them), then most bands I've read about, and he also makes comments like one early on in the book where he said that no one in the band is irreplaceable but him, period. I didn't care for that statement because while your name might be on it, that just puts more responsibility on you to be more all inclusive because you're no one and nowhere without the rest of that band and crew. It was an odd line he seemed to draw for me between humbleness and arrogance.

Overall, I still enjoy the music. I still think he's a hell of an entertainer. I still respect all he's done and what he's doing still at his age especially. I did enjoy the book. I learned things. I liked things. It wasn't bad. But I would also say that I had my disagreements and dislikes throughout it as well and I definitely didn't love it as much in the end as I was hoping to. I still do want to read a few of his other books now though. And I still really do love the title of this one as well - and all true musicians should live by it ... never look at the empty seats!

Chris Jarred says

2 stars split the difference. 3 stars for a decent autobiography about a great era of country music and the early days of radio, and 1 star for the stereotypical ramblings of an old Southern guy who, spoiler alert, is a god, guns and country right winger. Maybe a biography instead of an autobiography would have been better.

Stephen Wilhoit says

Reading this book was such a wonderful experience for me. I had seen the Charlie Daniels Band many, years ago but there was so much about his career I wasn't aware of. Those who helped him early-on as he transitioned from local to regional then ultimately national/worldwide recording/performing artist included names like Dylan, George Harrison, and even Ringo. His balance of songwriting and live performance is certainly admirable.

After becoming a superstar performer his career was short-circuited by a play-for-pay scam totally beyond his control. But he kept the faith, continued on with integrity, and rose again to an acclaimed and consistently successful level. Moving from Album Rock to Country (and other genres such as Gospel) show his timeless combination of talent and perseverance.

What was I most impressed with? His regard for family and colleagues/friends.

The chapter detailing Charlie's faith was amazing. His rationale was spot-on and presented in a way I've not quite heard before. The subsequent chapter on Israel was just as powerful. And the dissection he provided on the aftermath of 9/11 was spoken with a common-sense intelligence often lacking in the world.

Descriptions of his induction into the Grand Ole Opry and Country Music Hall of Fame at a relatively-late age were also emotionally powerful moments.

Thank you for sharing your affecting and inspiring autobiography with us, Charlie Daniels. And all the best to you in the future.

Karen says

A fascinating memoir by Charlie Daniels. Sure I've been to a few Charlie Daniels' concerts and greatly appreciated his musical talents but never knew anything else about the man until now. I am so inspired by him after reading this memoir. He covers facets of his life from humble beginnings to reflections of the past. He has a deep faith and shares some pretty powerful life lessons. Highly recommend reading his engaging story.

Kate Shannon says

I received a hardback copy of this book as a Goodreads Give-a-way. I love all kinds of music, and I love biographies. I know some of the Charlie Daniels' music (who doesn't know "The Devil Went Down to Georgia"? so I was excited to read it. Then I opened it and discovered it was autographed! And in the second paragraph of the book I discovered that Mr. Daniels and I share a birth date (although not a birth year). I was primed to start reading. Mr. Daniels is a story teller. I felt like I could have been sitting with him on the back porch in my rocking chair sipping lemonade as he spun his story. I learned many things about this man. I learned that he is totally self taught. I learned that he is forthright. I learned he is not afraid of hard work or admitting his mistakes. I learned he does not apologize for who he is. But most of all, I learned that he is dedicated to the things that are important to him--his music, his family, his friends, his faith, his

country, his principles. He puts it all out there with honesty and with a simplicity that is very engaging. Perhaps what I found most engaging were the tidbits of personal philosophy scattered throughout the book. The very title of the book is one of the most compelling. "Walk onstage with a positive attitude. Your troubles are your own and are included in the ticket price. Some nights you have more to give than others, but put it all out there every show. You're concerned with the people who showed up, not the ones who didn't. So always give them a show, and never look at the empty seats." We all would do better if we could ignore the "empty seats" we find in our lives. I'm glad I read this book. I will seek out some of his music that I've missed. I will page back through the book and copy some of the quotes and thoughts that I found engaging. This book left me feeling good--and that's a great place to be.

Michelle says

I didn't know a lot about Charlie Daniels but I figured this could be an entertaining book. There is a lot of humor and lot of straight forwardness and no beating around the bush. Some chapters were more interesting than others but overall the book held my interest. The chapters are short and to the point and the parts about him when he was young were the most interesting to me. Also, the chapter about Louis L'Amour was a great addition. I liked reading about him growing up in the changing times, which is why I read books like this. You can learn so many things by reading or listening to other people's stories.

Five stars.

"I received this book for free from BookLook. All opinions are my own."

Kayo says

This book did not disappoint. Charlie Daniels lives his life just like you'd think, but with a bit of spunk. He tells it like it is, but is honest and true. This is your good ol' boy. Lovely book!

Thank you to author, publisher and Netgalley for the chance to read book. While I got the book for free, it had no bearing on the rating I gave it.

Lisa Bowen says

In his book he touched on a lot different subjects. I saw him in the concert in New York. It was a very excellent show.

