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Charlie Daniels Band

Live At Rockpalast – 2012 (MiG Music/WDR)

Reviewed by Greg Yost





In November 1980, Charlie Daniels and his eponymous band were riding a wave of popularity brought on by the April 1979 release of the "Million Mile Reflections" album, which included the chart-topping hit *The Devil Went Down To Georgia*, and the July 1980 release of the also popular "Full Moon." Therefore, it is no surprise that the band, known for its hard-charging mix of country, bluegrass and southern rock and its high-energy live performances, was tapped by the West German WDR broadcasting corporation, to record a concert in Dortmund for its Live at Rockpalast television series.

Now, almost 32 years later, this concert is being released for the first time on both DVD and CD. As you might expect, this old recording lacks the audio and visual clarity found on new live music releases, but it really doesn't matter because this 15-song collection more than makes up for any technical deficiencies with a wicked combination of pure musicianship and historical significance.

It is immediately evident that singer, guitarist and fiddler Daniels and the other members of his sextet were hitting on all cylinders in late 1980. The band, which featured Tom Crain (guitar and vocals), Taz Di Gregorio (keyboards & vocals) Charlie Hayward (bass) and the two-headed drumming beast of Fred Edwards and James W. Marshall, sets sail immediately with a blazing rendition of *Funky Junky*, featuring some scorching dual lead guitar work from Daniels and Crain, and they never look back.

As you might expect, Daniels' hits like *Trudy*, *Legend Of Wooley Swamp*, *Long Haired Country Boy*, *Uneasy Rider*, *The South's Gonna Do It Again* and the aforementioned *The Devil Went Down To Georgia* are all great here, but none of them are the set's singular highlight.

That title easily goes to the nearly nine-minute version of the fiddle classic *Orange Blossom Special* that showcases the band members' considerable talents while closing the program. Daniels and company let loose and remind us that this band was, and continues to be, about much more than just an epic fiddle duel with the devil.

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