

SHOWCASE

ANTELOPE VALLEY PRESS, Aug. 28, 1987

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Daniels writes what's on his mind

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Southern rocker Charlie Daniels has some mighty strong sentiments about his country. And if his patriotism surfaces in his songs, it's because he writes about whatever he's thinking about at the time.

However, "I'm not a crusader," said Daniels in a phone interview from Omaha, Neb., where he was playing a show in his current tour. "If something's on my mind and I write a good song about it, I include it in an album. But if something's on my mind - no matter how strong it's on my mind - and I don't come up with a good song about it, I don't force the issue." And, indeed, his current Epic album, *Powder Keg*, steers clear of politics.

He'll be playing new and old songs - most written during his 16-year tenure with the Charlie Daniels Band - at his Antelope Valley Fair performance, set for Tuesday in the grandstand. On the bill with him is Tanya Tucker.

Daniels has been concerned about political issues for a number of years.

As a public entertainer, Daniels often reveals his political leanings.

In 1976, the band performed

some benefits for presidential candidate Jimmy Carter, then played at that president's inaugural ball. During the 1980 Iran hostage crisis, he had a hit with "In America." He followed that up with another hit, Dan Daley's "Still in Saigon," about the emotional scars left on Vietnam veterans.

Private citizen Daniels currently is concerned with the possibility that Americans may one

day discover they're no longer free.

"If we don't wake up, we're going to lose it," he said. "I cannot understand how this country has got so put to sleep over the years.

"I think communism is the biggest threat to our freedom. World domination is the only thing they'll settle for," he said. "And we sit back and get lulled

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Charlie Daniels...

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to sleep while they keep biting off pieces of the world.

"As far as aiding the Contras is concerned, I say this is the least thing we can do," said Daniels. "While these guys are playing politics in Washington, Central America has been taken over by communists.

"We'll have a Berlin Wall in Juarez, Mexico, in 20 years if this thing's allowed to continue."

Daniels said he believes the United States offers the best standard of living in the world.

He supports its writers as well. Recently, he's appeared in commercials advertising hard-bound books by western author Louis L'Amour. "He's a friend of mine," said Daniels.

American fiction writers such as Robert Ludlum appeal most to Daniels, who prefers mystery and adventure stories.

Daniels has even gone so far as to take a role in an episode of the mystery series, "Murder She Wrote." But becoming an actor is not foremost on his mind.

"I'd enjoy doing it, but it's not an obsession with me," he said. "It's something I would enjoy if the opportunity presents itself."

He also did a short stint as a "square," on the game show "Hollywood Squares," which he described as "kind of fun," but "not my cup of tea."

Daniels prefers to stick to his music, which is an eclectic style blending bluegrass, country, blues, rock and boogie.

"I listened to a lot of country music when I was growing up," he said of his influences. "And in the South you're exposed to blues. It's just kind of a national music, more or less."

However, "I like some of all kinds of music - I don't like all the meaning of it, but I like some of most every kind."

As a musician, Daniels is proficient on guitar, mandolin and fiddle, which he says is an extremely versatile instrument. "It'll play about anything you put into it, if you know how to do it."

Daniels has been playing violin since he was 16.

In one of his most popular songs, "The Devil Went Down to Georgia," he even beats the Devil with his fiddle playing. With that recording, he also beat everyone else to the Best Country Vocal Grammy Award for 1979.

He focuses his aspirations for the near future on his music. "I want every concert sold out and every album platinum."

But he said he hopes to have some time off to pursue his favorite hobby: fishing.

"I'd love to catch a 10-pound, large-mouth bass."