

CONFEDERATE RAILROAD – PRESS RELEASE

Overnight sensation - One of the most over-used and misapplied coronations ever. It's been used to describe CONFEDERATE RAILROAD in that very manner.

In the case of Railroad, it most often refers to the frenzy that surrounded the mega-hit "Trashy Women". From lead singer, DANNY SHIRLEY's perspective, "We weren't an overnight sensation; 'Trashy Women' was."

The facts are simple. The debut self-titled album had three singles before "Trashy Women" and was selling well. On the strength of "She Took It Like A Man", "Jesus and Mama" and "Queen of Memphis" the album sold more than 500,000 copies in its first 72 weeks. However it sold more than 500,000 copies in the first seven weeks "Trashy Women" was the designated single. It was a song that had every chance of never being recorded which is the stuff of ironic legends. Here is the Cliff's Notes version of its ascension.

As the last session for the Barry Beckett-produced album drew near, Danny and his manager met with Rick Blackburn, President of Atlantic Records Nashville. Danny really wanted to include the track on the album but he had been repeatedly rebuffed up to that point. The idea of the album's construction was to have the radio-friendly singles alongside darker, meatier tracks fans would discover when they came to the show. That would use radio and live performances to organically build the career and sell records. He knew this song did that night-in and night out.

There was a legitimate concern in 1994 from mainstream country radio about glorifying ladies who were "less than elegant" and how that would play in the broader context. But Danny had the advantage of knowing his audience first-hand and the chord the quirky tune struck with them. So when Mr. Blackburn said he "couldn't hear Danny singing this," the solution became obvious. Danny went from Mr. Blackburn's office to a studio and did a one-take guitar/vocal demonstration recording.

Anticipating Mr. Blackburn's next question, he then went directly to producer Beckett's office and played it for him, receiving an enthusiastic approval. Returning within hours to Mr. Blackburn's office with questions answered, Mr. Blackburn agreed to let it be recorded. He did so as a reward to Danny who had given great performances on other songs Mr. Blackburn knew Danny didn't love. However, it came with conditions. Most importantly that neither Danny nor his manager would ever ask for it to be a single. The stated reason: "Mark my words. This single would kill the band."

Perhaps what doesn't kill you makes you stronger. True to their word, neither man made that request. Instead Beckett produced a dance mix that was serviced to

clubs where many of the DJs spinning the tunes at country music clubs were also DJs at the local radio station. Based on the response the DJs saw on the dance floor, they went back to their stations and played the album track and dance mix on the air. Within weeks the stations were calling Atlantic telling them the radio audience demanded it be a single. A hit was born!

Deftly illustrating the “overnight sensation” dichotomy, the “Trashy...” phenomenon stood on the shoulders of nearly 20 years of slogging it out to the top. As a band, Danny & crew had been the opening act/back-up band/tour support mechanism for country bad-asses Johnny Paycheck and David Allen Coe. Danny recalls, “We learned a lot working with Paycheck and Coe. In a lot of ways what we learned was what not to do. In a lot of ways we learned exactly what to do.”

A house gig at legendary Miss Kitty’s in Marietta, GA, gave Danny the workshop to hone his craft. “Every night when we finished, I got right off the stage and went to the exit door to thank people for coming. They came out night after night and I appreciated that. I wanted them to know how much I appreciated them and I wanted them to feel like they knew me.” It’s a potent illustration of the connection between a Country artist and their fans.

With the release of the first single, “She Took It Like A Man” (featuring then-Atlanta Falcons head coach, Jerry Glanville), Marietta was soon a blur in their rear view mirror. After years of really being support players, Danny and the band suddenly emerged as the star attraction. The flood of hits included “Queen of Memphis”, “Daddy Never Was the Cadillac Kind”, “When You Leave That Way”, “Elvis and Andy” and “She Never Cried (When Ol’ Yeller Died)”. All painted a picture of real life through a distinctly southern lens.

Award tumbled in from the ACM’s and nominations for Grammy’s. What didn’t change was the work ethic and appreciation of the fans who found common ground in Railroad music. Several albums followed and success continued to be the unpredictable waves it always does.

Now, two decades later on, comes the new album, Lucky To Be Alive. In a myriad of ways it is the iconic milestone marker. From the title on, the gratitude Danny and the band feel is obvious. When recently asked how many times Danny has sung “Trashy Women,” his immediate response was, “I have no idea but I give thanks for the blessing every single time I do.”

It’s an intensely personal statement in the sense Danny is a writer on seven of the album’s songs. Although he’d been encouraged for years to write as an expression of his unique point of view, he deferred to the genius of the Nashville songwriting community. So what changed? “A divorce that devastated me,” Danny explains. “I thought I was on my way to the ‘husband hall of fame’ but she didn’t see it that way.”

As a means of processing his confusion, anger, resentment and ultimate acceptance, he channeled it all into the only therapy that pays you: Songwriting.

He called on long-time pal, Blue Miller, to help put the pieces of the musical and emotional puzzle together. "We started out doing demo's and it turned into a record," Danny reflects. "Blue and Dave Gibson had the Gibson-Miller Band which was like our musical cousin. Dave was writer on "Daddy Never Was The Cadillac Kind" so there was a lot of connection." He also drafted Exile band member and hit songwriter, Sonny LeMaire, to distill the life experiences they shared into songs-as-therapy.

The highlight of Lucky to Be Alive is a 20th Anniversary edition of "Trashy Women". It features guest stars Willie Nelson, John Anderson, Colt Ford, Jerry Glanville, Trigger and Cowboy. When some of the tracks are titled "Whiskey & Women," "The Goodbye Song" (which oughta be called "You Can Kiss My Ass Goodbye"), "Fast Cars and Guitars" and "Psycho Bitch From Hell" you know neither the pick-axe-sharp honesty nor the wry sense of humor has faded. But there's a soul search map in "The Man I Am Today" and "If I Ever Cross That Line".

Ploughing new ground is the first-ever bluegrass track, "Don't Feel As Young As I Used To" featuring Dan Tominski. "Bluegrass is something I've always admired but never felt good enough to play," Danny observes. "It doesn't get better than Dan Tominski though, and I was honored he joined us.

It's an evolutionary fact of life that bands change. Today's lineup is Danny in his role as Cub Scout leader & lead vocals; Mark Dufresne on Drums, Rusty Hendrix on lead guitar, Mo Thaxton on bass and Joey Recker on keyboards. As a continuing homage to partnership, Rusty played in a number of Miss Kittys' bands and Mo was an integral part of Dr. Hook. Mark has been a part of the Railroad mix for more than 30 years while Joey is on the road for the first time after retiring from the military.

Hardly the end of the tracks, Lucky to Be Alive is an up-to-date, unbridled take-on-real-life-fully-lived. It's true to its roots and it's reflection of the community Danny and the band reached out to, connected with, and continues to entertain for at least 100 nights a year.

What we can all count on is that the Railroad rolls on. While the existing tracks give some clue about where they are going, what is discovered along the way is a treat.