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Exploring Political Communication Through Strategic Artist-Candidate Relationships: The Case of a Southern Political-Celebrity Nexus in the 1976 Presidential Election

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to offer insight into strategic relationships between U.S. presidential candidates and music artists and to understand the meanings of such relationships in the context of political communication. Through an analysis of U.S. media sources, archival documents, and interview data, this study investigates music industry involvement in the 1976 presidential campaign. Specifically, this study examines Jimmy Carter's mutually-beneficial relationship with music artist Charlie Daniels via Phil Walden, the founder of Capricorn Records. The findings show Southerness as an overall theme: Both Carter and Daniels shared an affinity for Southern music, language, religion, and pride. Motivated by Carter's honesty in the aftermath of a credibility gap, Daniels performed campaign fundraising concerts that, in conjunction with the candidate's relationship with other artists and music executives such as Walden, exposed a new brand of political-celebrity nexus.

Keywords: political communication, music, Jimmy Carter, Charlie Daniels, Phil Walden

Music and, thus, musicians have been part of the U.S. political soundscape for centuries. The 2016 and 2020 presidential elections were no different as musical artists voiced respect and disdain for candidates, endorsed candidates, appeared with candidates, and performed their music in support of candidates.[1] Musical artists offered a variety of rationalizations for political endorsements, from policy-based issues to unconventional motivations. For example, Kid Rock chose Donald Trump since the candidate will "run the country like a business," 50 Cent selected Hillary Clinton for reasons associated with Bill Clinton's "lust factor" and "her seeing past that," and Joe Biden called upon the long-time champion of Democratic candidates Bruce Springsteen, who offered up "My Hometown" to endorse the Scranton, Pennsylvania native.[2]

While the fusion of politics and music in the United States emerged as early as George Washington's presidency, musicians initially composed songs for inaugural festivities, not campaign activities. Technological advances and social movements' use of music, however, changed such traditions, and a steady progression of integrating music emerged in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Throughout the 1800s, presidential candidates campaigned with patriotic songs, and a trend developed in which candidates commissioned musicians to write songs praising their candidacy and maligning other candidates. Broadcast communication via radio and television in the 1900s increased the demand for campaign songs. In the 1930s, presidential candidates began to use popular songs on the campaign trail; this practice became more common in the 1970s and persists today.[3] The 1976 Jimmy Carter presidential campaign is a context worthy of investigation for two reasons.

First, the 1970s was an interesting decade for U.S. culture, particularly the music scene. Originating in the 1950s and developing in the 1960s, rock and roll more closely aligned with political activism in the 1970s. Thus, rock music and politics mixed to an unprecedented degree.[4] Furthermore, the 1970s was an era of artist experimentation with new genres and subgenres, including Southern rock musicians who played country-tinged rock music while flaunting their Southern heritage.[5] The 1970s also brought artists such as John Denver and Barbara Mandrell who blurred the lines between pop and country music.

Second, the 1970s was an interesting decade for U.S. politics, sociocultural conditions, and economics. Amid the Vietnam War and Watergate, journalists popularized the term "credibility gap" to describe the discrep-

ancy between politicians' discourse and reality.[6] But in the 1976 election, former governor Carter from Georgia promised "a government as honest and decent and fair and competent and truthful and idealistic as are the American people."[7] In the same decade, an admiration for the "Southern way of life" surfaced.[8] Sunbelt economic opportunities and television portrayals of Southern family values initiated "redneck pride" with roots in country music.[9] Magazine and newspaper journalists such as *Chicago Tribune* columnist Jack Hurst, television shows such as *The Dukes of Hazzard*, and Hollywood movies such as *Nashville* further contributed to Southern music's mainstream acceptance and enduring cultural appeal.[10] Carter's election inaugurated a new view of the South as perceptions of the Southern "redneck" transformed from symbols of racial prejudice to those of the white working-class male.[11]

Previous research has focused on political campaigns' use of music (lyrics, voice, instrumentation, performance, effects, etc.).[12] This present study investigates issues beyond the music itself with a twofold purpose. First, this study explores how U.S. presidential candidates and musical artists communicate to construct strategic relationships that generate a political-celebrity nexus. Second, this study examines the motivations for and the meanings of artist-candidate relationships. This study also addresses Moss' call for scholarship about the interconnectivity of cultural identity and political party identity in the South and the strategies employed to communicate about such identities.[13] To examine the role of musical artists in presidential campaigns during an era of "the Southernization of American life," data specific to Carter's 1976 presidential campaign were collected from U.S. media, interview, and archival sources.[14]

Music as Communication in the Political Context

Philosophers have long recognized music as a communication medium. Plato argued for the persuasive nature of music, even warning about nefarious effects since music seems harmless.[15] Wicke confirms that music conveys meaning with the power to "shape patterns of behavior imperceptibly over time."[16] According to Rein, music may be the most influential art form with potential to alter individual and societal viewpoints since audiences rarely presume music to be persuasive and, thus, do not prepare "to counter arguments or to refute ideas, even if some were to be embedded or disguised in the song."[17]

Politicians are known to communicate with citizens through speeches, interviews, advertisements, debates, and social media.[18] Music and politics have merged since the biblical times of Saul and David.[19] Throughout U.S. history, political movements have used music as a "weapon."[20] Political identities and images have been cultivated through policies, words, and appearances and through musical lyrics and sound, both instrumental and vocal.[21] Music is an effective campaign tool since it appeals to voters' emotions, projects desirable attitudes, and humanizes candidates.[22]

Scholars have examined music as political communication in local and national campaigns, including the consequences of campaign music on a candidate's image, the ideological nature of songs written for candidates, and the effects of music in advertisements on voter behaviors.[23] Outlining the historical use of music in presidential politics, Gromis references William Henry Harrison's launching of the Golden Age of campaign songs and associations between musicians and John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon, respectively.[24] Brownell chronicles the efforts of these showbiz-minded presidential candidates to capitalize on the endorsements and fundraising capabilities of popular musical celebrities such as Frank Sinatra and the Rat Pack and Grand Ole Opry stars such as Merle Haggard, respectively.[25] Dewberry and Millen explore the campaign music of Ronald Reagan, George H. W. Bush, and Bill Clinton.[26] Blankenship and Renard show an increase in the usage of popular music, particularly rock music, in campaigns since the 2004 U.S. presidential election.[27] The literature provides robust analyses of the musical activity surrounding the Barack Obama campaign and the music associated with the Trump and Hillary Clinton campaigns, respectively, in advertisements, playlists, and performances.[28]

The aforementioned studies build upon the notion of music as a political tool. However, scholarship investigating the communication between U.S. presidential candidates and musical artists and the motivations for and the meanings of such artist-candidate relationships is sparse. Furthermore, there is little research focusing on Southern musicians' support and music in campaigns. This study fills the gap in the literature by investigating the case of Carter's 1976 presidential campaign, a campaign in which a Southern politician constructed relationships with a Southern record label executive and his acts in an era that redefined the "redneck" moniker.

Southern Music as "The Language of a Subculture"

Southern culture is one of the most identifiable among the subcultures in the United States. Music has been a constant, important presence in Southerners' lives.[29] With Southern origins, country music and Southern rock are closely related genres. Malone asserts that the history of Southern rock music "cannot be separated from the evolution of country music" as both genres are "homegrown" with Southern rhetoric and symbols.[30] Scholars, journalists, and musicians converge on the idea that such music functions to communicate emotions associated with Southern ideologies, values, and hardships.

Gregory argues that country music, historically produced and consumed by the white working class, has been "the language of a subculture" throughout U.S. history.[31] Malone concurs that "no genre of American music has been more intimately intertwined with the experience of working-class people."[32] Scherman claims that country music reflects "the vicissitudes of working class life," and Grabe refers to the genre as "the white man's blues."[33] Artists such as Charlie Daniels and Hank Williams Jr., combined rock and country aspects in the 1970s while emphasizing Southern identities; Williams asserts that his music "gave a voice to people who had traditionally been ignored—even despised—the lower class southern white, the poor farmer, the wage earner, the working man, the God-fearing family man, the bell hop, the black field worker."[34]

In the 1970s, Carter, who was born and reared in Georgia, served as Georgia governor (1971-1975) and then as U.S. president (1977-1981). This decade coincides with the time frame in which music industry promotion and mainstream media attention amplified the national commercial appeal of Southern rock and country music. The Country Music Association and the Academy of Country Music showcased country music to national audiences, business developers marketed Opryland USA and the Grand Ole Opry as Nashville tourist destinations, and musicians from various stylistic backgrounds married country and rock music.[35] *Wanted: The Outlaws*, a 1976 compilation album featuring outlaw country, a blend of rock, folk, and country music, became the first platinum-certified country album.[36] While Music Row in Nashville remained a top recording center for country music as well as rhythm and blues, recording studios in other Southern cities thrived, including those in Memphis, Tennessee, and Muscle Shoals, Alabama, and another launched by Phil Walden in Macon, Georgia. Meanwhile, in the 1970s, print and broadcast journalists

and entertainment media portrayed Southern culture and country music in an increasingly favorable manner, and music publications such as *Creem*, *Crawdaddy*, *Rolling Stone*, *Music City News*, and *Country Music* reported on Southern rock artists.[37] By the 1980s, country music was the fastest-growing genre of popular music in the United States.[38]

Analyzing the Case of Carter's 1976 Presidential Campaign

The literature review established the amalgamation of politics and music and the importance of Southern music as reflective of Southern culture. This present study draws upon literature about music as political communication to investigate musicians' support of a politician. If music in presidential campaigns is persuasive communication, then musicians are political communicators—and an understudied group of political communicators—who convey meaning through both musical performance and endorsement of politicians.[39] This study further considers literature about Southern culture to investigate the artist-politician relationship and the concurrent media coverage about such relationships within a Southern ideological framework. Considering Southern musicians publicly supported and then Americans elected the first post-reconstruction Southern president, the 1976 presidential campaign is an ideal case for examination. Furthermore, in 1974, federal campaign finance laws contributed to a new and vital form of political support—fundraising in the form of benefit concerts. During the 1976 campaign, journalists reported on Carter as one of the first and most successful at utilizing this resource. Thus, the purpose of this study is 1) to investigate how Carter and musicians communicated to construct strategic relationships and 2) to understand the motivations for and the meanings of such relationships in the context of political communication.

This study's theoretical approach centers on culture and ideology. Williams posits that culture is "a particular way of life which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning, but also in institutions and ordinary behavior."[40] According to Foss, "an ideology usually permeates everything produced in that culture or group, so its rhetorical artifacts—its works of art, religious practices, and institutions embody, enact, and express that ideology."[41] Hall contends that media are ideological tools that supply "images, concepts, and premises which provide the frameworks through which we represent, interpret, understand, and 'make sense' of some aspect of social existence."[42] McGee focuses on the

political realm and designates ideology as "political language, preserved in rhetorical documents, with the capacity to dictate decision and control public belief and behavior. Further, the political language which manifests ideology seems…composed of slogan-like terms signifying collective commitment."[43]

To examine the 1976 presidential campaign, particularly the ideology represented in Carter's communication and relationships with Phil Walden, the founder of Capricorn Records, and the Charlie Daniels Band, we incorporated multiple data sources and established a chain of evidence. First, we collected data from the top six circulating U.S. newspapers since media are a primary information source for Americans, and, in 1976, most Americans read at least one newspaper a day.[44] According to the *Ayer Directory of Publications*, the top circulating U.S. newspapers in 1976 were the *Wall Street Journal*, the *Los Angeles Times*, the *New York Times*, the *Chicago Tribune*, the *Washington Post*, and the *Boston Globe*. Through a keyword search in the ProQuest Historical Newspaper database, we gathered relevant full-text articles published from December 1, 1974, to January 31, 1977, inclusive.[45] December 1974 was the starting point because this is the month Carter announced his candidacy for president. January 1977 was the ending point because this is the month of Carter's inauguration. The search terms were "Jimmy Carter" and "country music" or "rock music" or "Southern rock" or "Capricorn" or "Phil Walden" or "Charlie Daniels." The search resulted in 121 articles. Second, we analyzed archival documents culled from the Jimmy Carter Presidential Library and Museum in Atlanta, the University of Georgia in Athens, and the Country Music Hall of Fame and Museum in Nashville. We identified documents through archival finding aides and with archivists' assistance. The documents included magazine and newspaper articles, news releases, administrative documents, and communication, including letters and memoranda describing activities of Carter, Walden, and Daniels during the 1976 presidential campaign. Third, Bier interviewed Daniels via telephone for nineteen minutes in July 2016, and Roessner interviewed Carter in Atlanta for thirty minutes in October 2014. Interview transcripts provided a deeper understanding of the motivations for constructing artist-candidate relationships and the meanings of these associations.

To probe the interview transcripts, archival documents, and newspaper articles in relation to their cultural and political contexts, we analyzed the data separately and then compared notes about emergent patterns and

themes via emails and in meetings. While engaging in extensive, repeated close readings of the data as suggested by Hall, we considered what the dataset revealed about how and why musicians and a politician communicated to cultivate mutually strategic relationships as well as media narratives about these relationships.[46] We selected representative examples of the themes that emerged in the data and interpreted how the dataset contributes to scholarly discussion about political communication and the meaning of artist-candidate relationships in presidential politics.

Findings

The overall theme in the data is Southerness. Jimmy Carter formed relationships with musicians with a Southern heritage and an overt display of Southern pride. Likewise, artists such as the Charlie Daniels Band supported Carter in part because of his Southern roots. Finally, journalists highlighted, sometimes in a stereotypical way through descriptions of appearance and through language (e.g., dropping the g at the end of words in headlines and articles), the Southerness of both Carter and the musicians with whom he associated.

The Beginning of the Relationship: “Jimmy Who?”

Phil Walden of Capricorn Records linked Carter to Southern musicians. Walden, a friend of Carter and an early supporter of his presidential candidacy, approached Daniels in October 1975 about publicly supporting Carter. At that time, Daniels hardly had heard of Jimmy Carter. Walden gave Daniels some literature to read about Carter and his policy positions and then Carter himself called Daniels on his birthday to ask for support.[47] Daniels agreed.[48]

A December 4, 1975 *Rolling Stone* article confirms this account. Daniels had not yet agreed to perform on Carter’s behalf, but he told *Rolling Stone* reporter Art Harris about his decision to support the relatively unknown, anti-establishment candidate. “I knew he was governor of Georgia,” Daniels said, “but that didn’t cut no ice with me because I didn’t know where he stood. I didn’t want to back someone who was gonna say, ‘We’re gonna kill the n****** and burn down the synagogues’ and that kinda shit. So I asked for some material and [Capricorn] sent me a whole pile of stuff. I read it and now I’m pledging my whole support to Jimmy Carter. He speaks plain; I can understand what he’s talkin’ about. He

stands for change and we need a lot of fuckin' change. I damn sure can't get behind Ford or Wallace, so I'm going to get behind Jimmy Carter."[49]

A 1996 Epic Records media kit offers additional insight into the origin of the relationship between Carter and Daniels: The media kit quotes Daniels as saying, "I didn't think he had a chance. When I was asked about doing something for him, he was 'Jimmy Who?' But he called me one night. I read some clips about him and I felt good about him. We'd come out of a catastrophic political time…Carter personified honesty and goodness."[50]

During the campaign and directly after the election, however, Daniels made it clear to journalists that no one pressured him into supporting Carter, an allegation that some Capricorn Records acts, including the popular Marshall Tucker Band, had made as early as December 1975.[51] For example, in regard to his support of Carter, Daniels told a reporter, "There ain't no son of uh, uh, gun gonna tell us what to do—We do what we want."[52] Soon after Harris's piece was published, Daniels finalized arrangements to perform in concerts to raise money for the Carter campaign. Thereafter, journalists frequently aligned Carter and Daniels, for example, noting that Daniels spent most of his time either "hugging Jimmy Carter" or "play[ing] a wild fiddle."[53]

Motivations for Supporting Carter

Prior to Daniels' support of Carter, many country artists supported conservative presidential candidates. In 1968, every major country artist who endorsed a candidate supported either George Wallace or Richard Nixon. Thus, by 1972, country music was aligned with the so-called "Silent Majority."[54] Daniels, however, was his own man both musically and politically. In the case of music, while many Southern rock musicians distinguished themselves from country artists, Daniels did not.[55] He blended traditional country instruments with rock sounds, and he associated with country artists such as Roy Acuff and Southern rock artists such as the Allman Brothers Band. In the same manner, Daniels defied the country music stereotype and chose his politicians according to his perceptions of honesty and a shared Southern heritage. "I don't look at what he says about issues and I don't think that 90 percent of the people out there do either," Daniels said of the fellow Southerner. "I just think he's an honest man."[56]

Credibility Gap

Daniels supported Carter's candidacy for president because of the loss of trust in the U.S. government, also known as the credibility gap, and because "the United States was in dire need of someone who would tell us the truth, and Jimmy Carter was a man who would do that."[57] During the campaign and after the election, Daniels expressed his disdain for politics to various journalists. For example, Daniels told a reporter that he "hates politics."[58] Carter's image as an honest man motivated Daniels to become involved in the campaign, and he often noted that he did not expect anything in return for his support. [59]

During the campaign, Daniels told the entertainment editor of the *Phoenix Gazette*, "I'd do anything for Jimmy Carter…He's my man. He's a good politician. He's honest. There aren't many of them."[60] But, despite his personal commitment to Carter, Daniels was not trying to persuade others to vote Carter, he noted time and again on the trail. "I'm not telling anybody to vote for Jimmy Carter," Daniels told a *Nashville Banner* reporter in 1976. "I'm just trying to raise some money for an honest politician."[61] On another occasion, he offered more insight into his intent to Associated Press reporter Matt Yancey. "I ain't trying to get anybody to vote for Jimmy Carter or anybody else," he said. "He convinced me and all I'm trying to do is help him raise money to convince other people."[62] Moreover, Daniels did not seek anything in return for his endorsement. "I look at this as my campaign contribution, and that's all it is," he explained to Yancey. "I probably won't see the man again if he's elected…and that's the way it should be. Presidents shouldn't owe anybody anything. I can say that, but General Motors and Standard Oil can't say that."[63]

Daniels did see Carter after the election—he played at Carter's inauguration. He continued to assert his simple rationale for supporting his fellow Southerner, "I got involved for patriotic reasons…I tried to help get him elected because I thought he was a good man."[64] "Along comes old Jimmy Carter, from Plains, Georgia…," Daniels later explained to *Dixie Lullaby* author Mark Kemp, "and everybody, even if they didn't agree with his politics, at least knew he could be trusted. That was a big, big thing at the time. It was something this country desperately needed. And he brought that to the presidency."[65]

Southern Identity

The Great Speckled Bird, the counterculture underground newspaper in Atlanta, identified the Southern connection between Carter and coun-

try music artists: “Like country music, Carter is clearly Southern based, yet has tremendous appeal for working people throughout the country.”[66] Carter, like Daniels, spoke the language of the working class, which appealed to the country music singer and many in his audiences. “I could understand what he was saying,” Daniels recalled, “He spoke my language. He was the man that America needed at the time; otherwise there is no way I would have done anything for him.”[67]

Daniels’ support of Carter’s candidacy had less to do with politics and more to do with the two men’s shared Southern heritage. “With me, it’s always been about the United States of America,” Daniels said. “I don’t care if someone’s from Mars as long as he does a good job, but it didn’t hurt that [Carter] was from Georgia.”[68] This was a reality that journalists eventually observed, and they often included quotes that emphasized both men’s shared affinity for Southern religion, music, and pride.[69] For instance, a *Nashville Banner* article quoted Daniels as saying, “I’m not a Democrat. I’m not a Republican. I’m a musician and a Methodist.”[70] Even after his role in Carter’s campaign, Daniels reiterated his desire to keep out of politics. “We just represent music,” he told a reporter from the *News Herald* in Willoughby, Ohio.[71]

However, as Daniels told Yancey after a performance, mutual passions around music and faith transformed him from a reluctant supporter to a campaign fundraiser.[72] Journalists often noted that both men listened to and chatted about country music and Southern rock.[73] “Whenever I see Carter, we talk about music. He listens to us,” Daniels said.[74] Carter was a big fan of Southern rock, particularly of the Charlie Daniels Band and the Allman Brothers Band, sounds that he and his advisors recognized had resonated with many of the nation’s young and working-class voters.

During the general-election campaign, Carter and his advisors incorporated music into his campaign events that highlighted his Southern heritage. For example, he adopted as his campaign theme Daniels’ hit song, “The South’s Gonna Do It, Again,” which dazzled audiences at the Sunshine Jam campaign fundraiser in June 1976.[75] The song lyrics summoned Southerners to “be proud you’re a rebel because the South’s gonna do it again.”

The Impact of Musicians' Campaign Support

Monetary Impact

In mid-May 1976, Carter introduced "one of [his] closest friends in the world, Charlie Daniels" to a Nashville crowd of about seven thousand young Southerners, reeking of marijuana, who jumped onto their chairs and started stomping as the Charlie Daniels Band broke into the "Tennessee Waltz."[76] In that one performance, Daniels raised approximately $25,000 for the candidate, and after collecting the names and addresses on the backs of tickets, the campaign estimated that they would collect more than $20,000 from federal matching funds. As the Associated Press correspondent reported, this was the original formula that the Carter campaign had used to fund their primary campaign in the new age of federal campaign finance reform. When all was said and done, Daniels raised at least $100,000 from his three benefit concerts for the Carter campaign before matching federal funds were added.[77]

Gathering an Audience

In 1977, the *New York Times* music critic Robert Palmer credited Southern rock music with helping to "create the climate for Jimmy Carter."[78] This was a fact that, even as a candidate, Carter never ceased to recognize. In May 1976, he explained to Associated Press reporter Matt Yancey that, "If it hadn't been for people like [Daniels], I couldn't have won any of the early primaries. I wouldn't have had the money to finance my campaign."[79] Daniels, however, was less quick to take credit for Carter's success in the primary and general-election campaigns. "I am not a professional person who does politics. I don't do that," he said. "We drew some attention. People would listen when we played his rallies, but what we said made no difference—it was what he said."[80]

At times, however, concert audiences were uninterested in what Carter had to say. For example, on October 6, 1975, Carter appeared with the Allman Brothers Band in Atlanta. The audience did not share the Allman Brothers' fondness for Carter and booed the candidate.[81] "The experience made me not want to do it anymore," Daniels said. "I support candidates, but I don't do it in public. I'm patriotic about the proliferation of the American dream and about the well-being of the citizens of the United States of America [but] my patriotism does not lie in politics because politics change.[82]

A Musical Footnote

This political-celebrity nexus was largely overlooked in media coverage of the 1976 election. When reporting on the connection among Carter, Capricorn Records president Phil Walden and Southern rock bands such as the Allman Brothers Band and the Charlie Daniels Band, most political journalists only briefly mentioned that Walden and bands under his label had provided crucial, early financial aid in the form of benefit concerts; they focused instead on other topics and, thus, the connection was primarily a footnote in campaign coverage.[83] Political reporters were so involved with everyday campaign coverage that they largely overlooked the symbiotic connection between Carter and the music industry.

Discussion

Enduring Relationships

The relationships between Jimmy Carter and Charlie Daniels and the other Capricorn Records acts persisted beyond the November 1976 election. Some speculated that Daniels expected favors from Carter in relation to music industry regulations in return for his campaign help, but Daniels avowed, "I've done what I did as a private citizen and Carter's campaign was financed cleaner than anyone's. I don't want anything out of it except a good president and that's what he's gonna be."[84] Capricorn Records executive Phil Walden expressed similar sentiments publicly, swearing that he did not want a thing. Carter had ingratiated himself with Walden and his Capricorn Records act by pushing for a strict antipiracy bill as governor of Georgia, and Walden imagined that Carter would push for the implementation of similar measures as president. Moreover, Carter and his advisors hoped that Walden and other record executives would enlist their artists to engage in similar fundraising efforts for the Democratic party and his re-election campaign.[85]

But, four years later, no such efforts materialized as Capricorn Records faced bankruptcy amid the decline in record sales that accompanied the recession of the late 1970s and as the Carter administration canceled all campaign appearances due to the unfolding Iranian Hostage Crisis. Though Carter's re-election campaign ended in failure, he nevertheless remained indebted to the Charlie Daniels Band and other Capricorn Records acts, including the Allman Brothers Band, whom he later contended "basically put us in the White House."[86] The admiration remained mutual.

"Jimmy Carter is the most honorable man to hold the office of president of the United States of America in my lifetime," Daniels told Kemp at the turn of the twenty-first century.[87] Nevertheless, despite his continued affinity for Carter, Daniels emphasized now and then that he "answer[s] to God; I don't answer to a political party…Politics is a no-win situation."[88]

Changes in Perceptions of the South

In the 1970s, the term "redneck" transcended from a pejorative to a point of pride.[89] "Jimmy brought attention to a part of the country that people didn't know a lot about," Daniels recalled.[90] In the process, Carter, Daniels, and the other popular Capricorn Records artists changed prevailing mentalities about the region. As Schulman observed, a decade earlier most Americans considered the South to be the "land of moonshine and fiddle music, racism and possum stew—a place they passed through as quickly as possible on the way to Florida."[91] And, though negative associations with the otherization in the film *Deliverance* (1972) remained, much to Carter's continued chagrin, some semblance of Southern pride had been reclaimed by these chic Southern rock acts and their good ol' boy image.[92] According to Kemp, "Ten to fifteen years earlier, a redneck was a fellow who wore his hair short or slicked back, was hostile to long-haired hippies who looked like Van Zant or Charlie Daniels…Now, many of the guys who looked like Van Zant or Charlie Daniels *were* the rednecks."[93]

Conclusion

This present study, through an examination of an era characterized by change in the U.S. political and musical scenes, elucidates how politicians and musicians form relationships, the motivations for such relationships, and the media coverage of such relationships. In this case, Capricorn Records executive Phil Walden served as a mediator between Carter and his Capricorn artists. Though some of his acts, including the Marshall Tucker Band, alleged that they felt pressured by Walden to endorse Carter and to perform on behalf of the presidential candidate, Daniels reiterated his autonomy in making the decision to endorse and to engage in fundraising concerts on behalf of Carter.[94] A reluctant political campaign supporter, Daniels identified with Carter based upon their shared Southern heritage, Christian faith, and love of the sounds of Southern rock music.[95]

Nevertheless, in a moment of investigative deconstructions, these artist-candidate relationships were becoming news on the campaign trail,

and reporters, such as *Rolling Stone* correspondent Art Harris, interrogated the origins and motivations for these relationships.[96] Though Daniels continuously asserted that he did not want anything in return for the celebrity benefit concerts, his contribution to the Carter campaign, many reporters believed that Walden and his Capricorn Records artists sought patronage in the form of the implementation of special measures for the recording industry. Amid these interrogations, and the simultaneous crises facing Walden and Carter, the political bandwagon built on the "redneck chic" of this new South of the mind derailed. Nevertheless, a mutual affinity endured as both Carter, Walden, Daniels, and other prominent acts in the 1976 campaign articulated gratitude for the extraordinary efforts to offer Americans "a government as good as its people."[97]

Although Giddens posits social actors have the ability to make intelligent interpretations of cultural provisions such as songs, recent research supports the affective power of music in the political environment.[98] Dewberry and Millen assert that musical performers have the ability to send and receive messages with live audiences and that music has "a much greater affective power than most, if not all, other forms of communication."[99] Nevertheless, measuring the ability of social actors to select or to ignore messages from a cultural product is challenging, and isolating the effects of musical performance on audience perspectives is difficult.[100] In the end, as Associated Press correspondent Matt Yancey reported on the trail, Carter was not under any misconception that the folks in the stands were cheering for him, but these concerts were priceless for their role in funding his campaign and providing a new source of volunteers.[101]

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