

HIGHWAY 101

by Tamela Meredith Partridge
"Our Brown County" magazine
Nashville, IN
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According to original founding member, Scott "Cactus" Moser, Highway 101 literally hit the road to find just the right band name.

"Curtis Stone, Jack Daniels, and myself were living near Highway 101 in Los Angeles when we got the group together in '86," says Moser, whose Highway 101 band will perform at The Little Nashville Opry on Saturday, Sept. 8, at 7pm.

"And our lead singer at the time, Paulette Carlson, was also living near a Highway 101 in Minnesota." Moser says. "We had four different opinions on

what to call the band, but we kept realizing how curious it was that we all lived near a Highway 101. We even studied up on it a bit. When the U.S. Highway System started numbering roads back in 1918, many states throughout the nation ended up having one thing in common - a Highway 101. The fact that there is really a Highway 101 of some kind in almost every state is what decided it for us."

In the upper eastern region of Indiana, State Road 101 is a north-south state highway that runs from eastern Dekalb County to southeastern Adams County.

"We've come across many states, much like Indiana, that still have a Highway 101 of some kind," Moser says. "People from all over used to bring Highway 101 signs to our shows that they'd taken off the roads."

The cutting-edge Pacific coast country-rock group successfully blended contemporary California with traditional Nashville in such No.1 singles as, "Somewhere Tonight," "Cry, Cry, Cry," "(Do You Love Me) Just Say Yes" and "Who's Lonely Now."

"People can sense when music is fake and when it's real," Moser says. "And they seem to identify with the fact that we've never had much pretense or tried to be something that we aren't. We've always just aspired to be real."



The smoky-voiced Paulette Carlson, nicknamed the “Stevie Nicks of Country,” cruised Highway 101 into the country music history books as being one of the first groups with a female lead singer.

Carlson took a turn off the highway to pursue a solo career in 1991, leaving the current line-up consisting of Moser (drums), Curtis Stone (bass), Justin Weaver (guitar), and Nikki Nelson (lead vocals).

Highway 101’s latest studio album, “Big Sky,” features twelve self-penned songs, a fresh production, and the same vibrant energy in their live stage show.

“One of the reasons we have continued to be successful over the years is because we always strive to maintain the same musical integrity in our live shows as on our records,” Moser says. “For that reason, we tend not to record things that cannot be reproduced live.”

Even after 21 years out on the road, Highway 101 is still heading in the right direction.

"We just keep trying to go forward with our music," Moser says. "But you're always going to be looking back sometimes as well. Which is understandable, because people still want to hear the songs that are classics for a group. We've always played music, we've always played on our own records, we've always been singers, and we've always been songwriters. And we just hope to continue doing that."