



STAYING 'CURRENT' By Andrew Tallackson, The News-Dispatch

Band makes it a point to keep things fun and fresh

The Current makes no excuses for being a get-up-and-dance cover band. In fact, it's earned a reputation as one of Northwest Indiana's hottest groups, playing not just the standards, but the latest mainstream rock and alternative hits. That means along with renditions of Lynard Skynard's "Sweet Home Alabama" or Mellencamp's "Pink Houses," fans might hear songs by Creed, Matchbox Twenty, Goo Goo Dolls or Vertical Horizon. "We've tried to stay current - no pun intended - to stay fresh for the fans," said Cary Thomas, the band's rhythm guitarist and self-described "bad boy" of the group. "That's what keeps our fans coming back.

"LaPorte County remains a favorite venue for the group, is gearing up for two major performances here in February. One is Saturday night's Summerfest Meltdown, the Michigan City Summer Festival board's new fund-raiser. The other is a show Feb. 28 at AJ's Bar & Grill, 2317 Franklin St., to celebrate the group's third successful year since its first public performance at the site back when it was Cedar Tap.

Lead guitarist Shane Coursel attributes the band's success and longevity to its ability to have fun and not take itself too seriously. "We all get along great," Coursel said. "I can't even count on one hand the number of spats we've had. We just want to go out and have a good time." "When people see us having a good time, they have fun as well." The Current, which also features Darrell Westmoreland on drums, Jeff White on bass guitar and Jeff Gajewski on keyboard, dates back to October 1998. At the time, Coursel and Gajewski left their local country-music band to try something new. They started rehearsing with other musicians, experiencing personnel changes in the process and never quite coming up with a name for the group, although "the basement gang" stuck for awhile. Thomas eventually came on board, and the band booked its first gig at Cedar Tap.



The group became known as The Current and subsequently made a name for itself at clubs and festivals primarily in Lake, LaPorte and Porter counties. Fans here are among their favorites. "They've really accepted us more than any other area has," Coursel said, with Thomas adding, "They're lots of fun, and they're wild, absolutely wild." (Coursel, by the way, lives in Rolling Prairie, where he was born and raised, while Thomas lives in Michigan City.)

During the next few years, the band's commitment to itself solidified. They became like family, celebrating birthdays and holidays together. Their admiration of each other's abilities is evident just by listening to them talk. ("This man is a wild man on guitar," Thomas said, pointing at Coursel. "He's one of the best in the area.")

The band prides itself on being versatile. Four of the five members provide vocals, while the band's repertoire is reaching upwards of 160 selections. The covers are forever expanding, including recent hits like Three Doors Down's "Kryptonite," Matchbox Twenty's "Disease" and Cake's "Short Skirt, Long Jacket."

The group has developed a few favorites among fans, from Santana's "Smooth," to Rick Springfield's "Jessie's Girl," to Rod Stewart's "Maggie May" to virtually anything by Creed. Occasionally, they'll toss in a few originals, but the goal is to inspire those listening to hit the dance floor, particularly to something they know and love.

The shows are never the same, Thomas said. The band has no specific set list, so fans who see the group perform more than once during the same weekend are treated to vastly different selections. It is that ability to keep things unpredictable, and fun, that constantly breathes new life into The Current. "We're not out to make millions," Coursel said. "We just want to go out and have fun with it." With a smile on his face, Thomas added, "And we definitely have fun."

More information on The Current is available at www.partywiththecurrent.com.