

Pure Prairie League

Their rich history goes back to 1969 in the Southern Ohio area where a group of young musicians initially played cover tunes at local bars. Original member Craig Fuller and early member George Powell were beginning to stir their song writing abilities around the time original drummer Tom McGail happened to catch a late night 1939 Errol Flyn flick called Dodge City. The movie's Pure Prairie League was the woman's temperance union attempting to clean up Kansas' most lawless town.

RCA signed Pure Prairie League after seeing them play in Cleveland, Ohio. The first album was released the following year. The most memorable thing about it was the Norman Rockwell cover from a 1927 Saturday Evening Post cover, " recalls Mike Reilly.

His (Reilly's) first gig with the band was on Labor Day 1972 thanks to member Mike Connor with whom he had worked previously. PPL's second album, Bustin' Out was finished and they hit the road to promote the music. In February, 1973, however, Fuller received Uncle Sam's summons to go to Vietnam Nam. He applied for conscientious objector status and ended up doing alternative service in a hospital in Covington, KY. The band was dropped from RCA soon after. "The band was struggling at that point and we eventually parted ways", recalls Fuller. "Even though Craig was the main founder of the three original members", says Reilly, "Craig saw that we picked up the torch and continued with it." Incredibly, college stations continued to play cuts from Bustin' Out until RCA was forced to seek out the group's whereabouts. Re-signed in 1975, the band

recorded Two Lane Highway. While they were in the studio, RCA released "Amie" from Bustin' Out as a single which has endured as a classic, being played constantly still today.

The changing musical times made it difficult for PPL to continue creating its same sound. As Disco dominated the airwaves, the band became aware that it too, had to make some alterations.

Someone auditioning for the spot of the departing Gorshorn brothers brought along a young man named Vince Gill. He hadn't intended on trying out for the band, but after jamming for the band, they offered him the job on the spot. "We had seen him play in 1976 when the band he was playing with opened up for us in Oklahoma City", remarks Reilly. "We offered him the gig then, but he said, 'Oh no, I'm playing bluegrass.' Two years later he came to Los Angeles with Byron Berline and Sundance and after we jammed again for a few hours, we offered him the job again and he accepted".

For their final RCA offering in 1978, Can't Hold Back, Gill, along with the other new member, Patrick Bolin, wrote more rock influenced country material and they added saxophone to the tracks instead of pedal steel guitar. Although it seemed to be an odd pairing, Casablanca signed the group and they enjoyed their biggest success with Firin' Up's first single "Let Me Love You Tonight," reaching No. 7 on the Pop Charts and No. 1 on the Adult Contemporary Charts. Personnel changes at Casablanca resulted in the loss of their deal once again and Gill departed after three albums in as many years. Reunited to treat us to music that sounds as good today as it did when they first performed, PPL is touring and enjoying every minute of it. PPL has been playing true to its original form. "People come to hear the music the way it was played back then," Fuller asserts. "We may have improved upon the fidelity, but when we do a song off one of our records, we do it just like it was recorded." PPL in the new millennium may be a curious prospect to band members,

but the bands longevity is a testament of the timelessness of the music. As they write for a new project, they've returned to their roots and it's no surprise that after all these years their sound is what Country Radio is about, proving good music is good music no matter when it's made or played--and you can go home again.