

The Drive to Hollywood

Right after I graduated college it was time to move to Hollywood. I picked Hollywood because I'd learned there are only four places on earth to be if you want to make it in the music business: London, New York, Nashville, or Hollywood.

I didn't want to deal with London. New York was too scary and dirty and Nashville had too many rednecks. I'd already done the redneck thing and I wanted a big change. Hollywood was the place for me. Hot chicks, lots of good weed, the sunshine, and rock n roll, baby! It just made a lot of sense to me at the time. It still does, for different reasons, of course.

My parents gave me \$1,500 for graduation, just enough to buy a beat-up, raggedy old van to get me cross-country. I guess I have some kind of weird karma with raggedy old vans. I found this Ford van for \$1,500 from some farmer dude in the boonies. I went over there to check it out and the van was in pretty decent shape, certainly good enough to make it to Hollywood from the east coast.

The guy who sold me the van was Paul Travis. He used to use the van to take his family camping. He was a Christian and I guess they were a Christian Camping Family. The funny thing about this van was that the bumper on the front was missing and Paul Travis had finagled on a wooden bumper. I took a closer look and read the words TRAVIS TRIBE. They were etched into the bumper, except the letters were backwards, so I guess if you saw it in your rear view mirror you could read it, or, maybe it was because if you crashed into someone you'd leave an imprint of your name. That's probably why he did that.

So I bought the Christian-Camping-Family-Travis-Tribe raggedy old van and got ready to move to Hollywood. Everything was all set to move with my friend, Kyle. We were good buddies in college and had already planned on moving to Hollywood together. Kyle had already stored some of his stuff in my parents' garage and it was all set. He was even with me when I bought the Travis Tribe van. But on the day of graduation, Kyle gave the commencement speaker a music demo that he made in MY studio, not to mention for free. It turns out that our commencement speaker was a famous record producer. So, the next day this famous producer guy called Kyle and said he was blown away, etc., by his tape, yadda yadda yadda and Kyle moved to New York instead of L.A. and made tons of cash singing, etc. I was left totally on my own. I've always been a loner and a self-starter, so that was nothing really new. I packed up my van with the help of my step-dad. He was the kind of guy that prided himself on his uncanny ability to be able to determine which shapes fit best with other shapes and literally packed to the brim every available square molecule of space in the van. It was completely filled with all my recording equipment and furniture and had just enough room for me to sit in the driver's seat and drive. I joined Triple-A and got a bunch of free maps and then I got a little credit card from my hometown bank in case of emergencies. Finally, it was time to head out to Hollywood in my raggedy old van packed to the brim with all my crap. It was June and just a month after graduation. In my family, after high school, you either get a job or go to college. I went to college and stayed there for as long as I could. I even took some courses twice, just so I could avoid the harsh reality of surviving in the real world 'cause I had no clue how to do that.

Anyway, I found myself in my van, all packed and ready to go and saying goodbye to my mom and step-dad. The problem was, that two weeks before, I flew out to Hollywood to find an apartment. No big deal, right? Well, I had borrowed a Ford Escort from one of my old roommates and was sitting at a traffic light when, all of a sudden, Bam! Some asshole crashed

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into us at 60 miles an hour! Me and my friend, Jim, and some runaway singer/songwriter that we found, got the world's WORST whiplash!

I mean, this was no joke. It was unbelievable how bad that accident was. It STILL hurts right now, 21 years later! Her car got totaled and we all ended up with neck braces, with permanently damaged spines.

The accident was by far the worst one I had ever been in. It was incredible, because the guy that hit us was in a Toyota Celica, or something like that, with the big black rubber bumpers that are perfect for ramming into someone at a stoplight. There wasn't one SCRATCH on that Toyota, and the whole back end of that piece of crap Ford Escort was all crimped in like an accordion. Just like in the cartoons, except this was real!

After we got crashed into I jumped out of the car to see what the hell had happened. I was in shock and not aware of the PAIN that would eventually plague me for the rest of my natural life.

The runaway kid we had picked up hitch hiking looked around the inside of the car, panicked, then jumped out and ran away without looking back. Maybe he didn't want to deal with the cops or who knows? I still remember one of the melodies that the little runaway wrote, called, "Lovely Little Henrietta" and the hook was, "Lovely little Henrietta, we can leave this town together..." He wrote catchy tunes for sure.

Anyway, I got out of the car and I'm looking at the accident, trying to sum up the situation, and the guy that crashed into us slowly backs up and I'm shaking my head like, no way man, you are NOT going to split from this accident scene.

The guy tries to leave, but I jump in front of his car and slap the hood really hard and yell, "you aren't going anywhere dude!" The guy just stops, locks his car, and sort of freaks out and we all wait for the cops to show up.

Eventually they come, and I explain what's happened and the cops take a look at the guy's car behind us and there's literally not even a molecule size scratch. There wasn't even a speck of dust that had rubbed off that super strong Toyota bumper.

I'm thinking to myself, "man, Toyota sure makes some super hard, indestructible bumpers."

The guy claims that he didn't crash into us, and the cops LET HIM GO! Can you believe that shit? So much for our police department, who are supposed to serve and protect. I don't think so. These guys were so stupid they couldn't have even sold ice to an Eskimo.

The day after the gnarly whiplash accident I called my friend Brian who had moved to Hollywood already and I told him what happened. He said his drummer, Snare Baby, knew a place for us to go to get our necks fixed. When I woke up the next day it was so bad I couldn't even lift my head from my pillow. It was like my head had been cut off, and was just connected by a thread.

Snare Baby's mom was a Scientologist and she worked for some crackpot chiropractors in Hollywood. Snare Baby told me they all specialized in working on necks from car accidents

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and we didn't have to pay because it was a rear end accident and we had the right insurance and our case was really good.

The chiropractors were all connected with the right Scientologist lawyers and basically scammed the system and us by "taking care of us." Basically, most doctors and insurance companies and lawyers have a little game they play when it comes to rear end accidents. It's not just Scientologists that play this scam.

In those days, the only kind of people I trusted were guys with names like Snare Baby, Furry George, Table Salt Johnson and Crossy Kitten. Last I heard, Snare Baby blew his head off with a shotgun. The way they found him was, his neighbors SMELLED him after he was already dead for two weeks. Nasty.

Anyway, Scientology is nothing more than a science fiction con that destroys peoples' lives and permanently damages unsuspecting naive victims. It's a cult and it's all 100% nonsense. It's dangerous and a huge scam on an international level.

But, the bottom line was this: those weirdo's did a great job with my neck and got me a pretty decent settlement through their shyster lawyers. They may be naive, crazy, cult members, but they aren't stupid.

I guess a lot of people are like that. Or, maybe a lot of people are crazy, naive, and are being scammed, but still manage to get some things done.

So, two weeks later, I'm back east, wearing a neck brace and I can't move my head ONE INCH, and I'm not exaggerating. I literally had the world's worst whiplash injury and all the muscles in my neck were torn to shreds and it literally hurt to walk or even BE in any moving vehicle, let alone attempting to drive one.

The pain was totally unbearable for any ride in a car of five minutes or longer. But I found myself driving alone in a neck brace, on a 3,000-mile journey, in a vehicle with bad shocks, a crappy AM radio, and no air conditioning.

But, hey, it's rock n roll man, I'm saying to myself, and I'm going to Hollywood to make it! Nothing's gonna stop me. Think of all the people who have made the perilous journey across the country and survived, like Lewis and Clark. Or, what about crossing the country in covered wagons and being attacked by Indians? I was on an adventure and I was gonna make it and nothing was gonna stop me, man!

So, I got in my van, turned my ENTIRE body in the direction of my parents and waved goodbye to them by lifting ONE of my arms very CAREFULLY so as not to cause a JOLT of PAIN to go SEARING through my shoulder and neck and I FORCED up a big smile and off I went.

I made it out of the drive way and realized that I couldn't even turn my head far enough to say goodbye and that I was in total pain and it had only been about 30 seconds since I'd left!

But I was young man, and I could do anything. Or so it seemed at the time... Somehow, I made it to Texas after a couple days of agony and it was in the middle of June and there was

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nothing on the radio except bad Bible belt religious crazy people talking about Jesus or bad country music singing and strumming about Jesus.

I was totally dying of heat and had no air conditioning. I was in severe pain the whole time and was sitting there in my underwear and a neck brace listening to bad Jesus music going over bumpy roads with bad shocks going, “ouch, ouch, ouch,” the whole entire way...it was not pretty, and I wouldn't wish that experience on my worst enemy.

Of course, the van broke down and overheated and, of course, I managed to find some redneck mechanic to take out the thermostat and get me back on the road. As I approached southern California it was like that scene in *Midnight Cowboy*, where Joe Buck (played by Jon Voight), had his little radio on the bus and he was heading for New York City and WABC is playing and he's all excited and laughing and smiling, telling everyone on the bus that he's going to New York City and that he's gonna be a hustler and take over that town in two weeks!

That's how I felt as I approached the Los Angeles basin...like Joe Buck.

Yippee! I thought to myself. I'm gonna make it in Hollywood and show the world who I really am. It won't take long either, no sirree, not long at all before I become a VERY famous musician. It'll be easy.

I finally made it to Hollywood – after seven days in total on the road in my raggedy ass van in my neck brace with bad shocks, wearing just my underwear cause the A.C. died around Amarillo Texas.

I have arrived in Hollywood!

Things are gonna be different now, man. Just wait 'til they discover me, and all my amazing talents. It shouldn't take long, either. It'll just be plain obvious to everyone that I'm the next big thing.

I've been telling everyone I know since I was 13 that I was going to be a millionaire and the next big music sensation and that it was just a matter of time. Just a matter of time really, that's all it's gonna take...

I wonder how I survived driving across the country under less than ideal circumstances. Maybe it's because I have a certain destiny. Or maybe it's just in my blood.

I heard that my grandfather drove to the Seattle World's Fair in the 50's on a motorcycle, all by himself. But see back in those days the darn motorcycles weren't really designed for long-distance travel. So, by the time he got there, all the extraneous parts had vibrated off. All that was really left was just the wheels, the motor and a couple other odds and ends.

He must've just held on to that old raggedy ass motorcycle, vibrating his face off with that determined look he always had. He wore those old-fashioned goggles with a leather helmet from World War I and a big scarf. He must've just held on to that giant vibrator and through sheer determination and willpower he made it all the way across the country. Maybe I get my tenacity from my crazy old grandfather. Who knows for sure why people do what they do?