

## DAN WEBER

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### IN HIS OWN WORDS...

When I was little, growing up in Western New York, we'd go on a big road trip every summer. We'd leave in darkness and I'd sit on the front bench seat of Dad's old Pontiac Catalina, mesmerized by the green glow of the dashboard lights. By morning we'd be in Pennsylvania and tomorrow we'd be crossing into the South. I sat up front because having 3 boys in the back seat was generally a recipe for disaster. Mom would navigate the interstates with her well-worn roadmaps folded just so. Dad would drive with both feet narrating at 70 mph, giving some obscure historical fact, the types of trees we were seeing, and where the long freight trains were headed.

When the reception was clear enough we'd listen to the local AM station, playing the 70's hit songs by Gordon Lightfoot, Johnny Cash, Marty Robbins, Harry Chapin, and Jim Croce, etc. There was something magical about those drives that made those songs and the stories in them come alive. I wanted to know the people in those stories and see the places in them.

Later, as a Boy Scout, I got my first chance to go 'West', to Wyoming, Colorado and New Mexico. I poured over maps for weeks, entranced by names of seemingly exotic places like: Cheyenne, Denver and Santa Fe. In 1988 I came west again for three months. This time, as an adult, I saw the country through new eyes: Las Vegas, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. One weekend we borrowed a friend's Nissan 240Z and drove down to Ensenada, Mexico. We then hitchhiked back up the California coast, sleeping on the beach and getting in as much scenery (and trouble) as possible before the summer was over.

Then one night back home in 1989 at a local bar on Water Street, I ran into this guy named 'Joe' fresh out of the Army, who said he was moving to Spokane the next day. I bought him a drink to help him celebrate, then he bought me one to help me help him celebrate. Before I knew it, I found myself in the passenger seat of his 1978 primer-grey Pontiac Trans-Am, headed west again, for the third time. Stopping at my best friend's house in Ohio, I was surprised to find him packed and ready to go. So we just made what room we could, in that little back seat.

The trip went fast and the county's great river's passed beneath us: The Mississippi, Missouri, Yellowstone, Snake and Columbia. In that wide open country I searched the FM dial for the songs and stories I remembered from road trips past, and frequently we saw trains, and I wondered where they were headed. We split up in Spokane, and at 4am the two of us headed to Seattle, the 'Emerald City', landing there unceremoniously under a blanket of torrential grey rain on December 2<sup>nd</sup> 1989.

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That was 22 years or half a lifetime ago. What I didn't know then was that once I left home, I could never really go back again. Seeing the country changed me and so did the people I'd met. I wanted to hear their stories and desperately wanted to know what mine was. So I kept searching

and kept moving. I spent 2 years in Utah as a Park Ranger at Canyonlands National Park. I drove cross country and back at least twice and slept under the stars as much as I could. I did a lot of late night driving and I'd love finding a local DJ who somehow knew the song I needed to hear. Finally by accident or fate, I found myself in Portland, Oregon, back in the Pacific Northwest.

I didn't know it then, but all that time searching for who I was and where I was supposed to be, I was right there all the time. I just couldn't see it yet.

In the studio one afternoon, legendary banjo and slide player Tony Furtado asked me how long I'd been working on this project. I think I answered '43 years, 10 months, 6 days and 2 hours'. I was probably only off by an hour or two.

So even though I've only just begun my musical journey, the songs and stories on 'Ash and Bone' have been with me for a long time. I like to think of my torn road atlas as part souvenir of the journey, and part guide to the future. I like to think that on any night, someone you meet can change your life. And I also like to think maybe you'll hear one of these songs and feel that it's as much your story as it is mine.

I'd like to think I haven't changed that much after all. I still love long drives to shows, festivals and to your homes. I still love finding that song on the radio that somehow the DJ just knew I needed to hear. I still watch for trains and wonder where they're headed, and I still love songs like the ones I grew up with.

I always fall in love with the stories...

Dan Weber  
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