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Earnest Timmy's Rolling Mother



I looked out over a sea of buzz cuts and ponytails just minutes before my professional debut. They were an unruly mob, all rebellious with their untucked shirts and social awkwardness. A crew like this didn't come together very often, and this amalgamation of eighth-grade boys from University School (US) and eighth-grade girls from Hathaway Brown and Laurel schools looked anxious. One part school dance and

one part meet-and-greet, all three junior high classes assembled here, in the cafeteria at US, before we broke for summer and then entered the big leagues of high school.

I was a stand-in. Just a healthy eighth-grader who happened to know all the words to Led Zeppelin songs. I'm sure Darin Freidman was at home kicking himself. He was The Man on campus, with his athleticism, his wisdom, dashing good looks and a voice like a meadowlark. Most important, though, he was the leader of the band, the front man of Mother Earth. Darin, however, had contracted strep throat the day before. Mother Earth needed a singer. I knew "The Lemon Song" by heart.

The gig was a rousing success. I made quite a few new friends that day, and I also decided that when I grew up, I wanted to be a rock star. Problem was, strep throat doesn't last forever. Darin returned to the band. I went looking for

a new one. Rolling Thunder was more my speed. Lots of 16th notes and double bass drums. I played one show with them, too, before they found a lead singer with cooler hair.

There was some musical success in college. I briefly played bass in a band called Timmy Likes to Fish. We opened for the Samples and Jackopierce, who were pretty big names in college towns back then. When I went on vacation, though, I came back to learn that I'd been replaced: I showed up at a bar with my bass that advertised Timmy Likes to Fish, only to see someone else on stage playing bass. He had cooler hair too.

I signed on with a 10-man a cappella group called Earnest Young Men. We were successful indeed, winning a few musical competitions and singing in front of a few sold-out auditoriums. I met my wife at one of those shows, and I finished my college career with those guys. But when I received my sheepskin in journalism, I traded in the pipes for a computer, and I hadn't sung so much as a measure since.

Then, this past January, *American Way* hosted our annual Road Warrior photo shoot. The contest had a music theme, and the shoot was in Austin, Texas, one of the greatest music cities in the country. Just watching our winners transform from laypeople into rock stars made me nostalgic for my rock-star days. You, too, can be a rock star if you enter this year's Road Warrior contest. We won't be in Austin for the shoot, and heck, this year's theme has nothing to do with music, but I encourage the devout travelers among you to step up to the mike and tell us your story. And I promise you'll receive rock-star treatment in this year's shoot location.

Because my hypocrisy only goes so far, when my buddy Jeff Jones asked if I'd stand in for a song with his band a few weeks ago, I thought back to Austin: I thought back to Earnest Young Men, Timmy Likes to Fish, Rolling Thunder, Mother Earth and Darin Freidman. And I said yes.

The Navin Jones Band, a collection of Austin-based rockers, had a gig scheduled at

the Green Elephant in Dallas. Lead singer David Brunson needed a stand-in for a Black Crowes song, as the higher register usually blew out his voice. My initial reaction was to say thanks but no thanks. The Navin Jones Band consists of professional, classically trained musicians. That, and they're an Austin band. To make it in Austin is to be at the top of your game, since that town has no shortage of live talent. They also have a cult following who'd scowl at the sight of a different front man, albeit for one song. Frankly, I had no business singing with this band. But the lure of nostalgia pulled harder than the moon's tide-generating forces, and I agreed.

The show was excellent, the hair was rockin', my wife was dancing, and I got to be a rock star one last time. There's nothing better than rockin' out. I'd encourage you to enter Road Warrior and do the same.

Adam Pitluk
Editor

To enter Road Warrior, visit www.americanwaymag.com. To hear the Navin Jones Band, visit www.americanwaymag.com/navinjones.