

## Chapter 1

### Planting a seed

In the Winter of 1994/95, I was singing in a band called Sahara Cross. We were a busy band who paid our dues playing the worst time slots, on the worst nights of the week, at several venues in the Dallas/Fort Worth area. We played small clubs in Fort Worth, shacks and restaurants in Arlington, and many of the clubs in Dallas' Deep Ellum. We'd been working hard, gigging two or three nights every week for a year. Toward the end of 1994 we had finally earned our way up to being an opening band for headlining acts at a couple of the better rock clubs in Dallas. We had released a 5 song EP and had many more songs written. The plan was to record more songs and keep building a fan base. But, God had other plans for me.

My life was changing. I was in the process of being saved. A person I worked with had been feeding me information about Christianity. I was raised Catholic, so I knew some of the basics but this was different. Slowly, I absorbed what I was being told and I was becoming more in tune to the changes God was making in my life. One of those changes was the music I was playing and the band I was in.

Sahara Cross was coming to an end. I knew it, but I wasn't admitting it yet. Maybe it was all the hard work, the late nights, the new songs we'd been woodshedding or had finished writing, the money spent to promote the band, whatever it was, I needed a solid reason to move on. I wasn't going to simply quit.

Well...God was getting ready to inspire me with a reason to change course.

Fatso's was one of the clubs Sahara Cross played at quite a bit. It was located in Arlington, Texas, on Lamar Street, on the north side of I-30 between Cooper and Collins streets. Fatso's was a restaurant during the day and bar/live music venue in the evenings. It was a good size place, could probably hold somewhere around 300 people. Wood grain walls, smelled like smoke, had a nice size stage and a very good PA system. Everyone there was cool to us. We always got a meal and a couple of drinks for free. They made sure we had good slots in front of other artists who had good followings so we could build our fan base.

The soundman was a guy named Chuck Ebert. He knew his PA system and he knew the room, which means he knew how to make a band sound good at Fatso's. Over the course of that year of heavy gigging, we played at Fatso's fairly often. During setting up and tearing down for shows, Chuck and I became friends. I learned that he was a guitar player and he wanted to start a band. He and I talked about it a little bit, but I wasn't really interested in being in more than one band.

One evening Chuck asked me, as a favor, to come out to Fatso's one night and sing some songs with him and a couple of guys he was jamming with. Chuck knew I was too busy to be in multiple projects, but it was very noncommittal. So, I told him I'd be there.

Since Fatso's was already set up with a stage, lights and PA system it was the perfect place to get together and jam, the only issue was, we'd have to get together in the evening after the bar closed....at 2 am. Now, understand, when a bar closes at 2am that doesn't mean that the place is empty. It means

that it's closed and customers have to leave, but the last band is still packing up and loading out their gear, the bartender is closing tabs, the waiters and waitresses are closing out and the kitchen is cleaning and closing down. Our jam session was set for 3am...seriously late at night, or early in the morning, depending on how you looked at it.

On a rare Saturday night without a Sahara Cross show, I showed up at Fatso's a little before 3am. I was good though, my life at the time consisted of playing bars several nights a week so I was used to going to bed at 3:30 or 4am.

Chuck had asked me to be prepared to sing a handful of cover tunes. One was a Pearl Jam song and I think another one was by Bon Jovi, I don't recall the exact tunes or the rest of artists we covered, but it was four or five popular songs.

After we all got there and got our equipment set up, there was some subtle jamming on our instruments and then we started to rumble together. I love it when a band rumbles. If it's done right, I get chills running down my spine and it makes the hair on my arms stand up. Drums, bass and guitars were all thumping away and building volume and intensity. I could feel it build toward launching in to the first song. As I turned toward my microphone to start singing, Chuck jumped up to his microphone and announced to a large, dark, empty room, *"Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome to the stage...VIIIINE"*.

*Haha! He's already got a name? And he's announcing us to a big empty...Wait, what did he say? Did he say Vine? I think that's what he said. Hmm, "VINE" that's a cool name. I really like the sound of that.*

I was so taken by his announcement that I forgot to start singing the song we had just kicked in to. Chuck looked over at me and I snapped back to the present.

After we played the first song, I turned to Chuck and asked, "What was the name that you announced?"

He confirmed..."VINE".

The night pressed on and we jammed for a good hour or more, playing our handful of tunes a few times each. Sometime around 5am it was time to break down, load up, and go home. We never played together again. It was fun, but I was distracted and inspired at the same time. I felt like God planted something inside me at the moment of Chuck's announcement.

By the time I got back to my apartment, the sky was starting to lighten in the east as the sun was beginning to rise. I was wiped out, and knew I needed to get to bed, but I couldn't get *"Ladies and Gentlemen please welcome to the stage...VINE"* out of my head.

For me, that night will always be the first night of the existence of Vine.