

On The Road Again With Adam Colton

Contributed by Jeff Gaites
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“You gotta check out these Adam Colton videos.” That’s what people were telling me during the summer of 2005. Not just one or two people. I’m a little slow on the up-take, so I had to hear it from several people before I actually went to check the videos out.

As usual, the people were right. Adam’s videos stand out right away for being laid-back, soulful, and light-hearted. The skating in the videos is as amazing as some of the story lines. For an eclectic trick-tip series, Adam works with another Adam (Stokowski) to create off-beat story lines with humorous, albeit random, monologues. Each video opens with a campy announcement, “Trick-tips with Adam and Adam!” Topics for the series include; “Walking the Plank”, “Chopping Wood”, and my personal favorite, “Cross-stepping”. In Cross-stepping, Adam Colton delivers a riveting performance offering the sage-like advice, “Remember kids, don’t be a robot cross-stepper. Turn your shoulders forward, point your feet forward, and get the ladies.”

After being lured into Adam’s eccentric world of skateboard videos, you come to find a purpose behind this young man. He focuses a great deal of his energy working with kids and giving back to the community. So, he’s not just another “skate movie guy”. In the summer of 2005, Adam and his friends skated across the United States to raise money for a local community center. Longboard Larry outfitted the crew with a beautiful set of drop-pins for the trip. To catch a glimpse of the cross-country tour, Francois Portmann and I met the crew somewhere near the Ohio-West Virginia border.

Please enjoy this story and the photos from the first official “Who is Adam Colton?” tour. For more information about the tour, and to check out some very cool videos, please visit www.whoisadamcolton.com. Also, start polishing your dance moves because Adam is working with Loaded Boards to design a five-footer that he assures, “will come alive beneath your feet.”

So, who is Adam Colton? If you have a computer and a longboard, you probably already know the answer to this question. More appropriately, the question should be “Who are Chris Gregory, Shayne Rivers, Byron Levy, and Adam Colton?” These are the four guys that skated from Newport, Oregon across the United States to Springfield, Virginia. That’s about 2,944 total miles (according to Mapquest), and there’s at least as much uphill as there is downhill.

Some of you may be asking yourselves the obvious question, why skateboard across the country? Well, our adventurous friend, Adam Colton was inspired by a Concrete Wave story about legendary Jack Smith who has skated across the United States on three separate occasions. At the time, Adam was looking for a way to get more involved with longboarding, and he did not want to get a “real job” after college. Adam reached out to Jack for some guidance and created the “Who is Adam Colton?” tour.

Focusing on the community, Adam set the tour up as a fundraising vehicle. Originally, he planned to work with the Boys and Girls Club of Washington D.C., but they bailed out a few months before the trip. Luckily, Adam was able to hook-up with another not-for-profit organization called the East Coast Round Wall Foundation. After meeting the president of the foundation and learning more about their focus, Adam decided to raise funds in support of the GreenSkate Laboratory in Washington D.C. GreenSkate Lab is a multi-purpose space for skateboarding, arts and science, and was built entirely by volunteers using reused and recycled materials (www.greenskatelab.org). To date, the “Who is Adam Colton?” tour has raised over nine thousand dollars for GreenSkate Lab without any corporate financial contributions. Let’s repeat that. All the money was donated by individuals, with some donations as small as one dollar. That’s grass roots, Baby.

Before you start planning a lovely, little cross-country skate to raise money for charity, let’s be clear. Skating three thousand miles is a massive undertaking. Oh sure, cross-country trips have a certain romantic appeal. Bikers, hippies, and writers have made the coast-to-coast trek. Now, Adam Colton and his crew have joined this “cross-country club”, and they did it without many, or most, human luxuries.

Take a closer look at the logistics of Adam's trip, and the romance begins to fade. Imagine three months on the road, literally. These guys were skating over fifty miles each day, rain or shine. The daily marathon sessions were evidenced by Adams shoes – lots of duct-tape holding those puppies together. Then, imagine sleeping on a school bus and not showering for six, or seven days at a stretch. Needless to say, things can get a little funky.

And what could be funkier than a big blue school bus? Adam describes the prominent support vehicle, “We did the tour using a 1966 Chevy school bus. It had two futons in the back, a fridge that smelled, and a TV that we really didn't use. It was pretty cozy.” This bus is the most visible element on the “Who is Adam Colton?” tour. You don't see many blue school buses cruising down the highway back-firing every so often to attract more attention. The bus's engine was rebuilt before the trip, but forty years of mileage can take a serious toll on the entire operating system. Adam reflects on the safety of the big blue beast, “it definitely broke down a lot and threatened our lives a couple of times…running through intersections, and losing brakes going down mountains and stuff.”

While we're on the topic of safety, this is a major concern when skating along the shoulder of any major highway. Having worked for the Virginia Department of Transportation, I've seen my fair share of road-kill. Naturally, watching eighteen-wheelers barrel by these guys at eighty miles per hour can be nerve-racking. And that's just watching. Adam characterizes the fear factor, “I went through three stages. In Oregon, I was scared of the cars, kind of frigid and everything. And by midway, I had a weird car-phobia where I would hear cars behind me, but they weren't there. And towards the east coast, I really just didn't care about the cars, and that was the most dangerous.”

Beyond the physical challenges and safety concerns, Adam and crew had to adjust to the monotony of life on the road. He characterizes the mind-set necessary for the trip, “It's pretty intense, and I don't think everyone can do something like this. After about a week, there is so much repetition.” Fortunately, Adam found inner peace explaining, “I really like the simple life on the road. I really like knowing what to do every day. You get up, you skate. I was really happy. I sung the whole time and I had so much energy.” On the bright side of every hill they climbed was the other side of the hill to ride back down. Adam describes his stoke, “You'd be coming up the hill and see that sign with a picture of a truck on the steep downgrade, and be like, nice!”