

# COMIC BACK AFTER U.S. CRASH



**SOLID...** Jim with his trademark double bass



**IT ONLY HURTS WHEN I LAUGH...** Jim in US hospital, his fringe poster picture, top, and with his pooch Mr Kippy, right

# Edinburgh Fringe will be my rehab

**COMIC Jim Tavare is using his stint at this year's Free Fringe as rehab — even though he has a \$500,000 medical bill to pay.**

The actor and comedian — who played barman Tom The Innkeeper, below, in the Harry Potter series — was involved in a head-on collision in Los Angeles last year.

It left the British-born performer in a coma for 10 days with a broken neck, 14 cracked ribs, punctured lungs, his leg broken in 20 places and his hand 'detached' from his arm — plus a bill for \$652,000 (£498,000).

But now he will take to the stage in Edinburgh next month for the first time since the life-changing incident.

He jokes: "This is the first time I've done any gigs since the accident. So I am using the Fringe as part of my rehab."

The Essex-born entertainer wrote and appeared in ITV comedy The Sketch Show and Channel 5's Jim Tavare Show with Office legend Ricky Gervais before moving to Hollywood.

He had been travelling with pet dog Mr Kippy when the accident occurred in April last year.

The dad-of-two recalls: "It was just a trip to the shops in the mountains where I live when the Sat Nav said 'new route found' which was 10 minutes



**EXCLUSIVE By**  
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faster so I took that. It was 2pm and I was going round a blind corner when there was a head-on impact. It was no one's fault. It was just one of those things.

"But the other driver was in a five tonne Dodge Ram pick-up truck and had not a scratch on him.

"I was driving something I now call a Mazda Crumple, which was Noli in its class for safety, or as I joke, 0-14 broken ribs in under a second."

The 55-year-old adds: "It really was in the middle of nowhere. There was no phone signal so a passer-by had to drive down the mountainside to call for help. I realised my dog had run away. But when they start to cut me out of the wreckage, Mr Kippy suddenly appears and bites the paramedic and the cop.

"So he ends up in the doggy prison while I was airlifted to hospital."

Medics asked his wife Laura to sign a consent form as he underwent an emergency operation.

He was also advised to contact his kids Louis, 20, and 17-year-old Maddie in the UK before being placed into an induced coma. Jim says: "I had to

Skype them to make our final goodbye. I really was hanging by a thread. "I'd broken the C1 vertebrae, the very top one on the neck. The break was a millimetre from my spinal cord. If it had snapped, everything from my neck down would have been paralysed. My hand was detached from the wrist and was just held on by the flesh."

As well as multiple fractures in his legs, broken ribs had pierced his lungs.

He says: "I'm pretty much down to one functioning lung now. The worst part of my recovery was opioid dependency which got out of control.

"I've never been a drug user but there I was on drugs 30 times more powerful than heroin. It was terrible.

"I was hallucinating. My wife would play me music and at one point I thought Willie Nelson was trying to steal my oxygen supply."

Now the comic can't wait to get back on stage as he's still trying to pay off his US medical bills.

He says: "Even though I have insurance you're not covered for absolutely everything. So I will have my bedpan out asking for donations after the show to pay it off."

● **Jim Tavare: From Deadpan To Bedpan, Laughing Horse in The Counting House, August 4-26 as part of the Free Fringe.**

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## POTTER FAMILY MAGIC

JIM reveals how working on Harry Potter turned into a real family affair.

He appeared in the 2004 film The Prisoner Of Azkaban as the host at The Leaky Cauldron pub. The dad of two says: "My kids spent all the time on the set with me. They encourage you to do that and really welcome them in. In the canteen you would bump into Dumbledore (Michael Gambon, left) and Snape (Alan Rickman)."

And Jim was amazed by the support he received from Potter fans around the world after his car accident. He says: "Tom

The Innkeeper has only been in one movie but there has been a real outpouring of support and love for me.

"When the world is in a bad place it really does give you hope that life is still going to be OK."

