



Travis Pike (center) and The Brattle Street East perform 'Watch Out Woman' in *Feelin' Good*

Things Just Aren't The Way They Seem

TRAVIS PIKE & THE BRATTLE STREET EAST's 'Watch Out Woman' may well be the best garage-punk nugget you'll hear this year. So why has it taken 51 years to gain a release?

LENNY HELSING explains all

Back in 1966, Massachusetts-born Travis Pike had just been asked to come up with some songs as part of a brand new teenage film which his producer/director father James A. Pike was in the process of making. After composing a set of 10 or so suitably modern sounding numbers, including the thoroughly explosive beat number, 'Watch Out Woman', young Travis was introduced to an exciting group who would back him on the subsequent recording sessions. Enter stage-right fictitious teenbeat ensemble The Brattle Street East, who in reality were the Boston-based group Oedipus & His Mother—an act mostly made up of Harvard University

students: Rob Cavicchio (drums), Jerry Ney (bass guitar), and Frank Werner (rhythm and lead guitar). Dave 'Street' Connors (rhythm and lead guitar) was from Boston University. "Frank and Street swapped off on different songs," recalls Pike today, "but Dave played the Fender solid-body, twangy guitar on 'Watch Out Woman'."

James Pike had already enjoyed tremendous success with a wild, action-packed affair called *Demo Derby*. This screeching, thrill-filled theatrical featurette included an excellent rocking title track, written by Travis Pike and played by The Rondels. During '64, *Demo Derby* played in picture houses and drive-ins all across the United States, often in support of

popular films of the day such as *A Hard Day's Night*, so anticipation for Pike Senior's new film project, *Feelin' Good*, was running high. "My music didn't carry the show," recalls Pike. "They only released the title song, 'Feelin' Good', written by me, but performed by The Montclairs, because it had already been pressed before the reviews." The Montclairs was a multi-racial group comprising three black vocalists and three white back-up musicians who featured on a few numbers, including 'Summertime'. "I did get on the flip side with 'Don't Hurt Me Again', a song I wrote", states Pike, "but did not actually perform on screen. It's a voice-over as I walk around the city, looking miserable."

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Although *Feelin’ Good* the movie was to die a commercial death and would lay buried for decades, still unseen to this day, some of the sounds more than stand the test of time despite Travis Pike & The Brattle Street East not being a regular gigging group. “After more than 50 years, my recollections are fuzzy, at best. I may have met the musicians for the first time at the recording session. Arthur Korb, who had arranged my ‘Demo Derby’ title song and recorded it with The Rondelets, arranged the songs for *Feelin’ Good* and rehearsed the band. Going by common practice at the time, and the idea that I had to sing eight songs in the single session, I suspect that if I sang along with the band, I was in their headphones, doing a scratch track from an isolation booth, to help them keep their place, and to familiarise myself with the arrangements. Once the tracks were down, still in the isolation booth, I sang the songs to playback. Studio time is expensive,

so I’m guessing that the band members sang their parts at the same time, but all together, in another isolation booth. Mixing time is less expensive, especially if none of the performers are there to ask for replays, and to the best of my knowledge, none of us were. I know I wasn’t.”

The singer himself went on to local notoriety firstly with Travis Pike & The Boston Massacre and later – becoming popular with garage-punk aficionados after being rediscovered in the late ‘80s/early ‘90s – hitting out with the terrific ‘If I Didn’t Love You Girl’ issued on the Alma label in ‘68 by Travis Pike’s Tea Party. After the passing of their father, younger brother Gregory sent Travis the only known surviving three reels of the feature. Eventually some of the contents of *Feelin’ Good* were professionally salvaged, and Pike then uploaded them to the internet. “What little I could salvage was beyond any sort of affordable colour correction,” he discloses. The songs, in

particular ‘Watch Out Woman’, alongside its newly-issued State label flipside ‘The Way That I Need You’, are astonishing period pieces that have catapulted fans of that particular vintage and, more specifically, those for whom thrilling ‘60s garage and beat/punk sounds are the equivalent of a musical nirvana, into paroxysms of unadulterated joy since their revelatory appearance online.

One has to ask the time-honoured question. Why on earth wasn’t ‘Watch Out Woman’ picked up by a half-decent record imprint back in ‘66, and released with a generous promotional budget to help it achieve radio station breakout status followed by all-out national exposure which surely could’ve rewarded Travis Pike & The Brattle Street East with the high chart placing ‘Watch Out Woman’ so rightly deserved? “I expect my father was disappointed in the box office for the movie,” admits Pike. “His promotion campaign (and frankly, his approach to the movie) was too provincial for the times – and where he may have hoped for an art house success with his fixation on Richard Lester’s *The Knack, And How to Get It*, no doubt reinforced by his fantastic success with *Demo Derby*, he only managed to make a movie that was neither Malibu nor London, and apart from the music, left the audience longing for the after-party.”

➔ ‘Watch Out Woman’ / ‘The Way That I Need You’ is out now on State. Further information is available at travisedwardpike.com



The Montclaire in '66. This name was enough to keep the movie from being distributed in the American south