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1964-1974: A DECADE OF ODD TALES AND WONDERS

The repercussions were swift and terrible. Street racing cost me my license, my market job, and my car. Financially wiped out, grounded, and with no prospects in sight, a tour in the Navy sounded good. If you weren't in school, getting drafted was almost certain, but if you joined, you'd get your choice of schools. It was April and spring was in the air, so with empty pockets and the call to adventure ringing in my ears, I enlisted. Or you could say I followed an old Yankee tradition for young men down on their luck, and with no prospects in sight, ran away to sea.

My high test scores brought me to the attention of the Commanding Officer, but "boot camp" was mostly marching, washing, and folding clothes. The more challenging military-type things were fire-fighting, target practice, tear gas training, swimming, learning to turn your clothes into

RECRUIT TRAINING COMMAND
U. S. NAVAL TRAINING CENTER
GREAT LAKES, ILLINOIS

J23-03:dv
1650

20 JUNE 1963

From: Commanding Officer, Recruit Training Command, Great Lakes, Illinois
To: PIKE, Travis Edward, 693 22 07, Seaman Recruit, Company 125, U.S. NAVY
Subj: Letter of Commendation

1. The Commanding Officer takes pleasure in commending you for your outstanding performance of duty while undergoing recruit training. During the period of your training you have maintained the highest average score of the weekly composite examinations given to your company. Your outstanding performance attests to those qualities of initiative, perseverance and devotion to duty in you that are the attributes of all outstanding Navy men. It gives me great pleasure to extend to you a "WELL DONE."

2. A copy of this commendation will be placed in your service record.

IRA N. KING
CAPTAIN U.S. NAVY

flotation devices, knot-tying, naming parts and types of naval vessels, and learning nautical terms like “port” (left), “starboard” (right), “ladder” (stairs), and let us never forget that “head” means “toilet.”

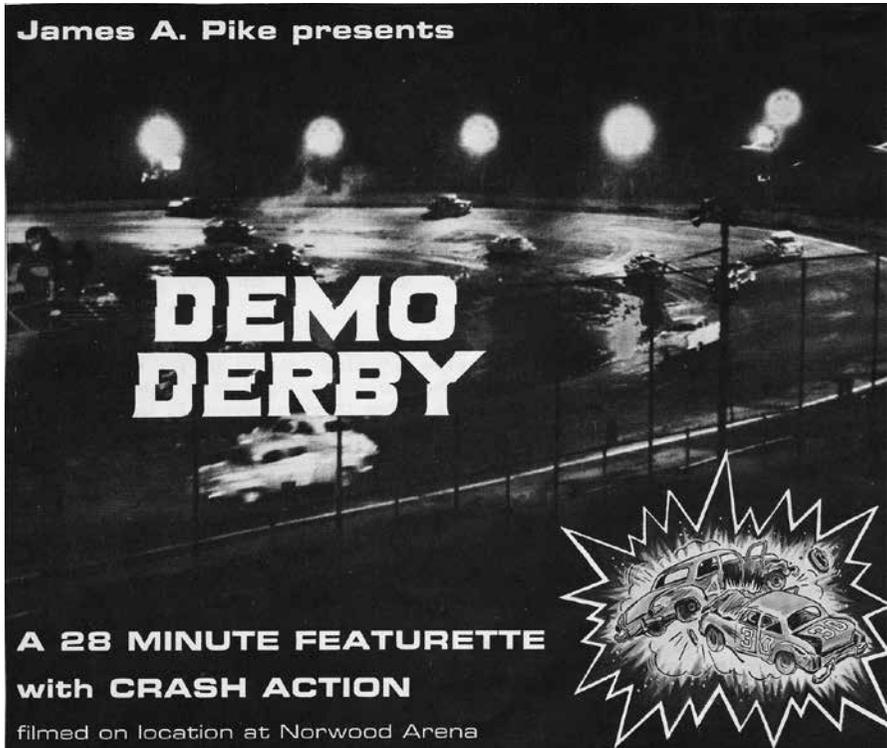
After boot camp, I reported to Yeoman “A” school in Bainbridge, Maryland, where I learned to type and heard the drumbeat that drives my song, “Oh Mama,” played by Fire Control Technicians as they marched to classes.

I had two weeks leave before I had to report to my shore duty station in Germany. My older brother (now going by “Pike,” in the Army, and “Jimmy” at home), had one more week at home before he shipped out, bound for the Berlin Brigade. When he left, I felt marooned (note my use of the nautical expression made famous by Robert Louis Stevenson as the fate endured by Ben Gunn in his classic novel, *Treasure Island*).

That last week, before I left to go overseas, my father screened “dailies” of the demolition derby action he’d shot at Norwood Arena. Even without sound, it was exciting footage. I suggested it needed a good rock’n’roll title song, so he told me to write one.

I couldn’t tell if he meant it or was being facetious, but it didn’t matter. I recorded a demo for him, and forgot all about it. However, while I was stationed in Germany, Arthur Korb arranged and produced the song with The Rondels, and it became the title song to *Demo Derby*.

James A. Pike presents



DEMO DERBY

**A 28 MINUTE FEATURETTE
with CRASH ACTION**



filmed on location at Norwood Arena

with a music score that will **ROCK YOU . . .** featuring the sensational **DEMO DERBY** title song (Travis Pike - Arthur Korb) - recorded by the **RONDELS**.



PREMIERES JUNE 24th
at the following theatres:

- ☆ **PARAMOUNT** - Boston ☆ **CAPITOL** - Worcester
- ☆ **ALLYN** - Hartford ☆ **PARAMOUNT** - New Haven

A **FIRST THEATRICAL FILM** from the producers of dozens of special purpose films and hundreds of commercials for Network and Spot TV.

In 1958, James A. Pike formed Pike Productions to make TV commercials, documentaries and films for industry. In 1964, his first theatrical release, *Demo Derby* opened with Frank Sinatra in *Robin and the Seven Hoods*, Elvis Presley in *Viva Las Vegas*, and played on screens all across the country with the Beatles *Hard Day's Night*.

At first, I declined. My military duties had to come before the band. I could only be booked as a guest star. He readily agreed to that and more. His offer was worth considering. I didn't know if he could land the recording contracts he said he could, but it couldn't hurt to find out.

That night, during the shows, I evaluated the players in both bands, and after the final performance, told Werner who they were. He arranged for us to audition together at a hotel ballroom in Preetz. We all liked what we heard, and before I left, they named themselves "The Five Beats."



Teddy Pike - AKA *Die Twistsensation aus USA* (center), with the Vampiros at Gasthaus Schröder

The Five Beats international showband

Besetzung

Teddy Pike
USA

Twist and Show Sensation

Enriko Lombardi
ITALIA

Gesang, Gitarre

Eddy Christers

**Gesang, Gitarre,
Klarrinetta, Baß**

Charly Ross

Saxophon, Baß, Gesang

Ringo

Gesang, Schlagzeug

Chorty West

Gesang, Gitarre, Saxophon

**Die Stationen dieser
erfolgreichen Band
waren:**

Star~Palast~Kiel

Studio 62

Eckernförde

Schützenhof

Rendsburg

Demnächst auch



I agreed to appear exclusively as their guest star, whenever and wherever I could, when I was on liberty from the U.S.Navy.



The Monclairs' first prize performance at the Battle of the Bands won them their appearances in the movie, and photos like this provided a reference for recreating the stage in the studio.



I didn't remember being there, but *cinéma vérité* proves I was.

1964-1974: A DECADE OF ODD TALES AND WONDERS

I arrived for treatment at Chelsea Naval Hospital on 23 October 1964 and cleared for limited duty, was transferred to Newport Naval Station in Rhode Island on 6 August 1965 to await further orders, which means that while I was undergoing physical therapy, I had plenty of time to write a number of novelty songs to entertain the hospitalized servicemen.

One liberty weekend, I met Arthur Korb, from the start personable, enthusiastic, and eager to share his knowledge and experience. Our first assignment was to run through a number of my songs, and prepare lead sheets. He did all the musical notation and I supplied the lyrics.



Arthur Korb's lead sheets for some songs I wrote for *Feelin' Good*.

I knew nothing about running the songs past the New York “tunesmiths” until I read the article in the newspaper, but Arthur could easily have played them on the big grand piano in the living room at the house on Lake Avenue, and my father might as easily have recorded demos of them.

My first official assignment from Pike Productions came in mid-June 1965. I was to supervise the recordings of the music tracks to my songs by Oedipus and His Mothers, (aka The Brattle Street East). The songs had been selected by my father, arranged by Arthur Korb, and the band had already rehearsed them when I met them for the first time for a Saturday recording session at ACE Recording Studios in downtown Boston. It was my first visit to the recording studio, too. As for me supervising the session, Arthur was definitely, and properly in charge of that. It seems to me, all I did was to say hello to everyone, and confirm that each song was in a comfortable key for me. I remember asking Arthur if there would be a saxophone on the final recording, but my father, on the control room talkback, quickly killed that idea. Time was money and the clock was ticking.

My next movie assignment was two days of off-camera recording in mid-July, while I was still at Chelsea. My father died in 2012, and when his estate was settled, I received a stack of *Feelin' Good* production stills, including these showing me performing some function at an orchestra session conducted by Arthur Korb. Could we have been recording Arthur's score so early in the process? I recognize ACE Recording Studios, and Arthur is definitely conducting, and I can think of no other recordings for *Feelin' Good* that required so large an orchestra.

1964-1974: A DECADE OF ODD TALES AND WONDERS



In this photo, Arthur is the confident bespectacled gentleman on the left. I'm the intense brute on the right.



These photos cannot accurately reveal the entire orchestra, each section properly miked and baffled, all seeing the music for the first time and nailing it in one rehearsal and a few takes. Yes, there were four-track Scully's, and some solos were recorded after the master, but to say the music in that room was brilliant is an understatement.



Paul Holzwarth operates one of the cameras for the grand finale exterior location sequence filmed on the Charles River Esplanade.

In this shot, I'm performing "Watch Out Woman" on stage with the Brattle Street East (left to right), Guitarist Dave Connor, Drummer Rob Cavicchio, Bass player Terry Ney, and Guitarist Frank Werner. The four other significant characters in the foreground are my screen girlfriend, Karen, dancing in front, one "row" back, Danny, dancing with Elaine, (in black, wearing a bandana), and between Karen and Elaine, Judi (played by Judi Reeve), hugging herself to stay warm. The blustery day was great for sailboats, but more than a little chilly for the cast.

The next time we were all together, was at the world premiere of *Feelin' Good* at *The Paramount Theater* in downtown Boston, with a marching band, searchlights, and motorcade complete with a motorcycle police escort.

1964-1974: A DECADE OF ODD TALES AND WONDERS



(above) Patricia Ewing, Judi Reeve and I arrive at the premiere.
(below) My father ushers us through the crowd and into the theater.





Finally, on the big night, with all the excitement in the air, Filmmaker and Pike Productions president, James A. Pike, accompanied his stars, Patricia Ewing and me, on our way into the downtown Boston Paramount Theater for the 26 October 1966 world premiere of the first Boston-based, feature-length, widescreen, color, musically inspired, theatrical motion picture, *Feelin' Good*.

**ALL NEW FACES - 10 NEW SONGS
THE BIG NEW SOUND**

featuring **TRAVIS PIKE** and 8 of his songs

INTRODUCING **THE MONTCLAIRS** First Winners of the Jaycees Battle of the Bands
WITH **THE BRATTLE STREET EAST** AND FOLKSINGER **BRENDA NICHOLS**
AND **JUDI REEVE** **PATRICIA EWING**



JAMES A. PIKE
PRESENTS

Feelin' GOOD



IN WIDE-SCREEN COLOR

Starts Wednesday, October 26
PARAMOUNT THEATRE
Downtown Boston

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I have no photos to prove it, but my corpsman friend, Bill Somers, upon being honorably discharged from the Navy, moved to Boston with his wife, Judy, and daughter, Lisa, and were here in time to settle in, get a babysitter for Lisa, and attend the World Premiere.

COFFEEHOUSES, CONCERTS, CAMPUSES, AND CLUBS

That night, my “victim” died on my cape, making it impossible for me to rise until I shoved her out of the way. I had to sprint across the stage to get back into my coffin before the music cue shut the lid, leaving the club crowd screaming with delight.

1500 attend mixer Saturday night; Music provided by Tea Party



Photo by Steve Gretter

Travis Pike’s Tea Party plays for a mixer Saturday night in the Student Center for one of the largest throngs ever to crowd the Sala de Puerto Rico. The mixer was sponsored by Burton House and BU’s Charlesgate Hall.

November 11, 1967, I ushered for my brother Jimmy’s wedding, but couldn’t stay for the reception because I had the MIT Mixer that night. Halfway through the evening, my brother and his bride appeared. I hadn’t been able to dance at their wedding, so they came and danced at my show.

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Our manager introduced us to Squire Rushnell when we played at Alexanders, a genuine nightclub. Squire was a producer at Boston's WBZ-TV, who was looking for talent for his new variety show to be called *Here and Now*. Squire had said he'd be in touch when he was ready to go forward, and he'd come back around to say he wanted Travis Pike's Tea Party to be the new show's house band, and asked Karl and I to be the show's musical directors. Naturally, we agreed. It had taken a while, but it looked like we were finally on our way to fame and fortune.

We were booked for two more consecutive weekends at The Psychedelic Supermarket. The first with The Fugs, who by their own admission, were not musicians, but satirists. The Supermarket crowd found them hilarious. Spirit was next -- excellent musicians from Los Angeles. They rocked, but they were pretty jazzy. So much so that Karl and Phil V wanted to do a number in our Jazz Trio configuration, featuring Karl, Phil V and Mikey Joe, to show Spirit they were kindred spirits, but the audience reaction to our first show made me stick with plan A. There were five of us and Spirit, while obviously talented, didn't heat up the room the way we did.

That January 1968, *Boston Herald Traveler* article about the "Boston Sound" gave as much space to Travis Pike's Tea Party as it did to the Boston Sound, going into who we were, how and when we got together and our special skills. The reporter may have been a fan, but he was not clairvoyant. We never were signed by a major label.

Boston Herald Traveler, Friday, January 26, 1968

— HUB-HUB —

Boston Sound Stirs Interests

By JIM MORSE

The current Newsweek proclaims that the Boston Sound is “what’s happening” in the music business today. Major recording companies have scouts here checking the sounds and musicians making them. What amazes insiders is not the sudden recognition, but the fact that the talent has been here for years with no recognition, not even locally.

The Beacon Street Union, The Phluph, Orpheus, and The Ultimate Spinach are the names of local groups whose albums are being released this week. The next combo to be snapped up by a big label will be Travis Pike’s Tea Party. It took eight months to put this outfit together, and six months of rehearsals to learn the 80 original songs the group performs.

Karl Garrett, lead guitarist in the Tea Party, is considered one of the outstanding classical guitarists in New England. Pike, who is from Newton, starred in the movie, “Feelin’ Good,” which was filmed here two years ago. The group has been featured at the Psychedelic Supermarket in Kenmore Square and the Unicorn Coffee House, where it’s making a repeat appearance this week.

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Back in January 1968, pundits were predicting the Boston Sound would eclipse the San Francisco Sound and the cold war between the mainstream and underground media began heating up. The Boston Sound was immediately labeled corporate hype - especially by fledgling, counter-culture, San Francisco-based *Rolling Stone Magazine*.

In fact, MGM record producer Alan Lorber's 1967 Boston Sound marketing plan was logical, but had little to do with sound in terms of intonation, instrumentation or style. His idea was to create a sort of "off-Broadway" clearing house for new talent spawned by Boston's coffeehouse scene, taking advantage of the city's quarter million college students as a proving ground. With the advantage of 20/20 hindsight, I think Boston was an excellent hub from which to launch an "American Musical Revolution," but I think the use of the word "sound" contributed to its collapse. Motown had a definitive sound. Nashville had one. San Francisco had one. Boston had many -- and because it had many, I don't think it ever had a single unique sound that could be specifically identified as a "Boston Sound."

Moreover, his marketing plan was anathema to Boston's Brahmins, the conservative upper crust of the East Coast establishment, who believed drugs, decadence and dissidence were promoted in pop music and lyrics. Their concerns were true enough, nationally and internationally, but less so in the Boston music scene.

We at ground zero, who believed we could identify a San Francisco Sound or a Liverpool Sound by listening to recordings originating in those markets, found no such unifying sound dominating our local music scene. The most

popular sound in dance clubs was the Motown Sound. Folk music, much of it only “folk” in style, still drew young people to coffeehouses, but even Dylan went electric at the *Newport Folk Festival* back in 1965, and by 1968, Travis Pike’s Tea Party, drums, electric bass, electric guitars and all, was playing in coffeehouses, in Boston and Providence, Rhode Island. Rock, blues, jazz and country all remained popular in their dedicated venues.

We finished January back at The Unicorn, our fourth weekend in a row for George Popadopolis, just before the start of the Tet Offensive in Vietnam. The effect of the Tet Offensive was indirect, but nations are made up of people, and people, whether engaged or detached from the events that shape their world, are nevertheless compelled to experience the effects of their nation’s histories, economically, politically, psychologically, and spiritually, and the ramifications of events in 1968 still shape our lives.

Perhaps that’s why I never knew, or maybe just forgot, that according to a notice I found online, the J. Geils Blues Band was to play a *Rock ‘n’ Roll Festival* at The Catacombs to benefit Project 50, a YMCA affiliated organization, on February 14th and 15th. The show, featuring Sky People, The Third World Raspberry, Cloud, Travis Pike’s Tea Party, and The Colwell-Winfield Blues Band was cancelled when the venue lost its license after a police raid.

In April, Squire Rushnell launched his variety show *Here and Now*. For people unfamiliar with the pecking order among Boston’s radio stations in the late sixties, WBZ radio was the powerhouse for Top 40 rock ‘n’ roll. Reasoning the TV show would finally get us a recording contract, we had

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signed on, and shortly thereafter, recorded “If I Didn’t Love You Girl” and “The Likes of You” for Alma Records -- not the major label we’d hoped for, but Joe Saia’s label, and Joe was the owner of the AAA Recording Studio where we pre-recorded the music for the TV show.



We’d been discovered by a group of students from the Rhode Island School of Design who owned The Rubicon Coffee House in Providence, a great venue with enthusiastic fans in a small but packed room. They began booking us regularly, one weekend a month. The morning after our April performance, Mikey Joe’s station wagon was vandalized and some equipment, including his bass guitar, was stolen. The local authorities told us that on that Saturday night, April 13th, there had been a rash of crimes which they believed were in reaction to the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr. We were simply a random target.

WBZ put *Here and Now* on hiatus to work out bugs in the show. It had been keeping us busy, but now we would be available to play at *The First Annual Boston Pop Festival* at The Psychedelic Supermarket on Friday, May 17th. It was fun to be back in front of a live Boston audience, and

we shamelessly promoted our new recording, asking our fans to call in and request to get it played on the radio.

William Phillips, a critic covering the festival wrote, “Travis Pike’s Tea Party performed in about every conceivable pop style from straight rock to psychedelic to folk to rinky-dinky ragtime. Aside from an excessive fondness for gimmickry and bad humor, they are pleasing and versatile entertainers.”

I don’t know William Phillips, but his review sounds accurate. With regard to our gimmickry, I think we did our vampire show there, coffin and all. It was the kind of thing we would do at a festival. And maybe the vampire’s wish that he could find a steady girl could be considered bad humor, but ultimately, Travis Pike’s Tea Party’s material reflected all the current musical trends in Boston -- which brings me back to The Boston Sound.

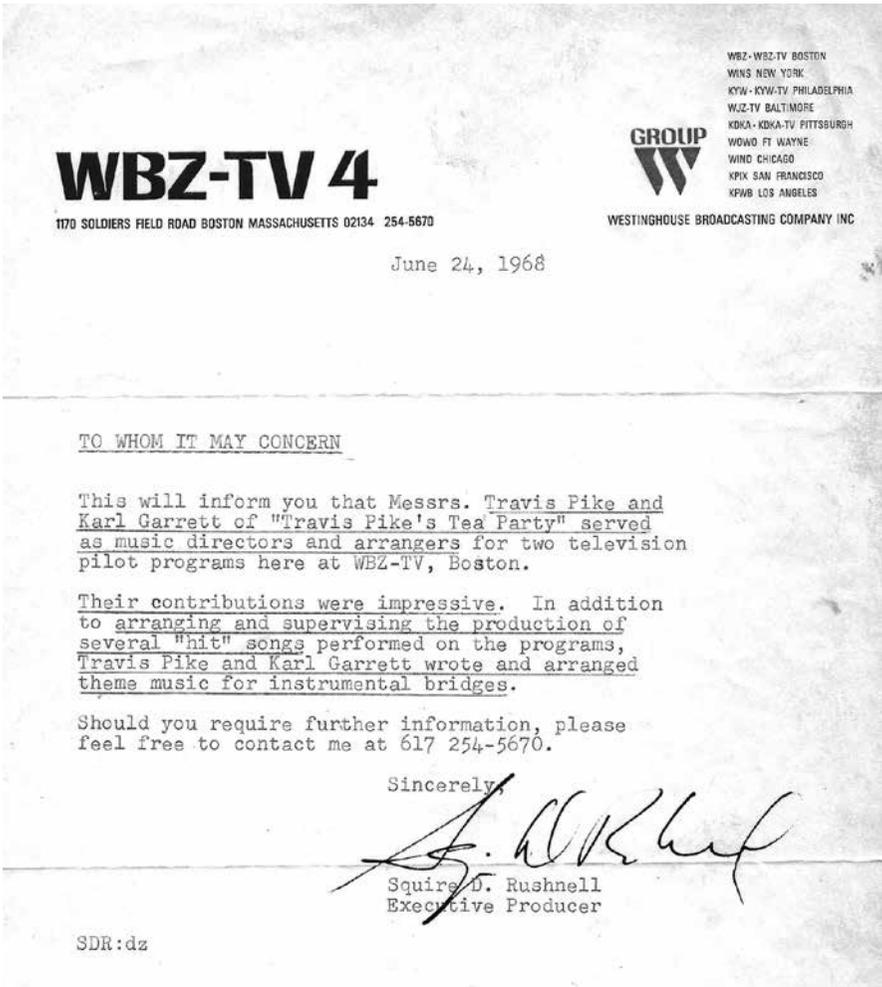
To me, the Boston Sound was neither sound nor genre, but an eclectic and inclusive melange of sounds. I had been active in the coffeehouse scene, but my roots were even deeper in show tunes and rock ‘n’ roll, and I composed in “every conceivable pop style.” We were a Boston Sound, but not part of that promotion. Lines I discovered in one of my notebooks summed it up. “Now let our course be set, and if the Muse sings true, when the dragon sails, there’ll be a bench for you in my long ship.” Originally about staying the course in my fantasy-adventure *Long-Grin*, to me, it applied to Travis Pike’s Tea Party, as well.

Then, on June 6th, 1968, the night he won the Democratic Party’s California Presidential Primary, Robert Kennedy was assassinated in the pantry of the Ambassador

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Hotel in Los Angeles. The war in Vietnam was not only ongoing, but escalating despite Walter Cronkite's editorial, and all around me, I saw the pernicious effect of the drug-culture mantra, "tune in, turn on, drop out," fueled in part, by much of the popular music and media pundits of the sixties, an ongoing assault on everything I believed about America.

We were officially "on hiatus" when we received the phone call saying the show had been cancelled.



AFTERWORD: AN INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY KUBERNIK



HARVEY KUBERNIK
photo by Heather Harris



TRAVIS EDWARD PIKE
photo by Judy Pike

HK: I guess the first question has to be why did you decide to expand and revise your original book, *Travis Edward Pike's Odd Tales and Wonders, 1964-1974: A Decade of Performance*?

TP: In the five years of interviews since I published that book, I've released four more albums and I think I've learned what most interests my readers. In this book, I address those interests in much more detail than I did in the first book, or ever could in an interview. For example, U.K. based Lenny Helsing, in his long-form interview for *It's Psychedelic Baby Magazine* <psychedelicbabymag.com/2018/02/the-travis-edward-pike-story.html>, asked me what my most memorable performances were, and I realized that my most vivid memories of gigs were of those in which I had overcome adversity. And not just that. I also realized that what Lenny wanted, wasn't dates and places, but stories about those gigs and what made them memorable.

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TP: Neither the AM or FM radio world programmed or broadcast us, although as recently as the April 2018 issue of *Goldmine Magazine*, Lee Zimmerman's four reviews for his Quick Picks list, were all from my current releases on CDs. Of *Travis Edward Pike's Tea Party Snack Platter CD*, Zimmerman wrote, "All the songs included herein are radio worthy and hold up surprisingly well, even some 50 years past their prime. Timeless and tuneful, these re-recordings compare favorably with anything offered up by The Monkees, The Raiders, The McCoys, The Standells and others of that ilk."

HK: And here we are, 50 years later, and some of the same rejected or ill-fated songs have now achieved a second life on the internet and are being re-released or reissued in England.



TP: Since you bring it up, Travis Pike's Tea Party's 1967 Alma Records original recording of "If I Didn't Love You Girl" began appearing on compilation albums in 1994, when the song was included on the German compilation album

AFTERWORD: AN INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY KUBERNIK

Sixties Rebellion, *The Backyard Patio*. The following year, it was on the *London Records* compilation, *Tougher Than Stains*, and in January 2017, appeared on the new untouchables *le beat bespoke 7*, album released by Detour Records.

But the breakthrough, if that's what it is, came when my brother Gregory sent me salvaged reels of 35mm film that had been in my father's vault in Rhode Island, and damaged in the great flood of 2010. The cans were rusted shut, so I took them to Deluxe Labs to see if any of the film within could be restored. The film was warped, which made perfect color restoration impossible, but the mono optical soundtrack sounded great, so I color-corrected the film as best I could and posted them on Youtube in 2016. My Charles River Esplanade performance with the Brattle Street East, of "Watch Out Woman" was singled out that November in Tim Perlich's blog, *The Perlich Post*, when he wrote "The best music video of 2016, was actually shot in 1966."

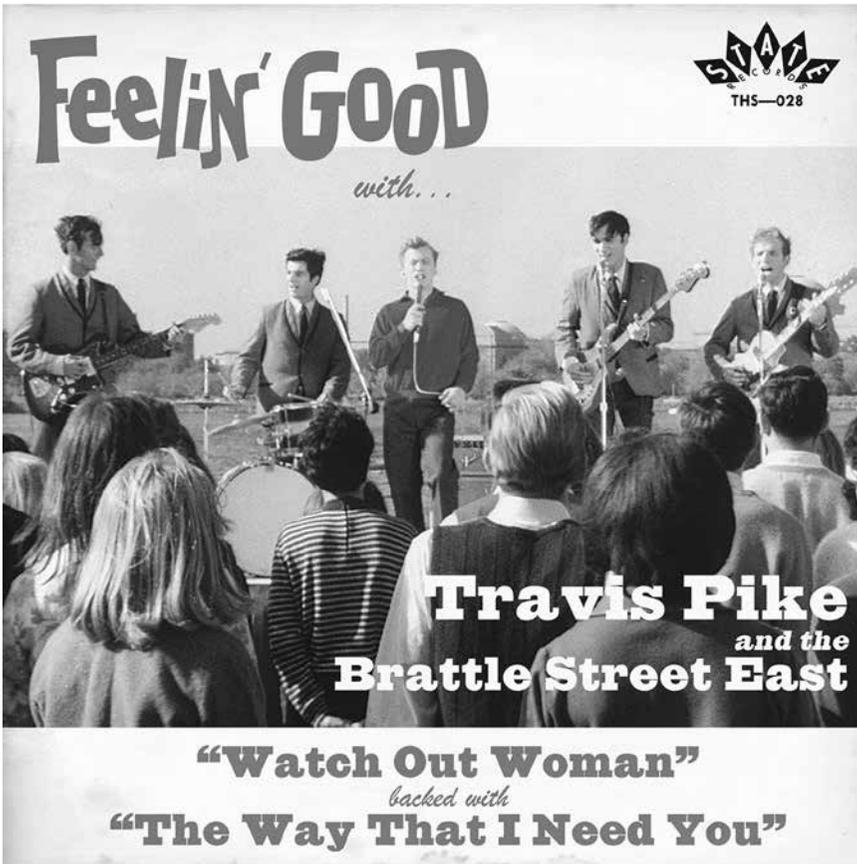


Then, for the Winter Issue of *Ugly Things* magazine, Mike Stax wrote an excellent review of *Travis Edward Pike's Odd Tales and Wonders, 1964-1974: A Decade of Performance*,

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(Otherworld Cottage Industries, 2013), and published your six-page pictorial interview with me in that same issue.

Mole and Lois, over at State Records in the U.K., read *Ugly Things*, and between the book review, your interview, and the video clips posted on Youtube, decided to contact me about releasing a single of the two songs I performed on the Charles River Esplanade with the Brattle Street East, both of which had never before been released.



The record received great reviews in *Shindig!* and *Record Collector* magazine in the U.K., and in *Ugly Things*,

AFTERWORD: AN INTERVIEW WITH HARVEY KUBERNIK

and *Goldmine* magazine in the U.S., and began getting radio play in the U.K., several European countries, and wound up in *Shindig's* Best of 2017 issue as the third best single release of the year! And that all led to two monster reviews: Lenny Helsing's review in *It's Psychedelic Baby* and Andy Pearson's review in his *Fear and Loathing Fanzine*.

Best of all, those last two interviews addressed my current recordings of my original, never previously released songs from the sixties and early seventies, as did Lee Zimmerman in his *Quick Picks* column in the April 2018 Rock and Roll Hall of Fame Issue of *Goldmine* magazine in which he wrote, "the songs are of a vintage variety, but the arrangements meld both classic and contemporary elements. Pike may not have gotten his due early on, but this belated return makes the wait worthwhile."

HK: Now that I think about it, your saga maybe should have not been titled *Odd Tales*. What is so odd about your tale?

TP: You've already said it. If Travis Pike's Tea Party, and my original songs, were, in fact, the antithesis to the counter-culture revolution of the sixties and seventies, by all accounts that makes my story a very odd tale indeed, especially when considered within, or in counterpoint to, that period's pop music milieu, which makes it a wonder we worked at all – and drew crowds and loyal fans to our performances.

HK: Since your earlier book, over the last few years your catalog has grown and reached new eyes and ears. Many terrific reviews and some multi-page stories have been

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published chronicling your life and your music in your early twenties, and you and they are now coming to the attention of audiences here and abroad.

TP: I'm not sure there's a question in that statement, but all this contemporary attention certainly is a "wonder," is it not?

HK: Definitely a wonder . . . or as some might suggest, possibly a phenomenon whose time has finally come.

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