

# ODD TALES AND WONDERS

## STORIES IN SONG LINER NOTES

Travis Edward Pike  
Otherworld Cottage Industries



Adam on Travis' knee in Disneyland, 1968. Travis' left ankle was broken in an auto accident in 1964, and he can't do much standing or walking without a cane, normally held on his right side. For this photo, he had to put Adam on his good right knee, so he's standing on the weak ankle side, supported by the cane held in his left hand.

Adam and Travis Pike produced this album at Adam's studio in Pasadena, California. Travis wrote most of the original music and lyrics between 1964-1974. He and Adam began bringing them into the present in November, 2012. Travis sang his songs and he and Adam arranged them. In addition to recording, mixing and mastering them all, Adam sang the harmony vocals for "Ali Baba Ben Jones," "Oh Mama," and led the bar crowd chorus for "Loup Garou" (The Werewolf Song).

Colleen Stratton was the victim in "Till the End (The Vampire Song)". In "Screamin' Caretaker Blues," she played Stephanie, Terry Hagerty played Peter, and Judy Pike played Betty, the wildlife shelter owner. Colleen, Terry, Judy, Adam, Kris Snyder and Barbara Jordan sang the crowd chorus in "Loup Garou" (the werewolf song), and Karen Callahan sang the obbligato lines for this new version of "The Likes of You."

Travis and Adam dedicate this version of "A Red-backed, Scaly, Black-bellied, Tusked, Bat-winged Dragon" to the memory of their mutual friend, David Carr, for his brilliant piano arrangement and performance in this 1984 version for which special thanks are also due to Lonnie Snyder, Mary Moyers, Julie Long and Michael Moores who sang it with Travis and David, and to Philip Moores, whose master recording of that piano demo stood the test of time well enough that Adam could rescue it from the archives and import it so they could add the drums, tuba (and fire alarm) that make it part of this never-before-released collection of *Odd Tales and Wonders: Stories in Song*.

01. "End of Summer" was the first song Travis wrote in Chelsea Naval Hospital while recovering from bone graft surgery on his left ankle. He wrote two verses in German for his German fans in anticipation of returning one day. Ten years later, filmmaker Gerard Alcan heard Travis sing the song at a party, and declared it "the perfect *Zeitgeist* for his documentary *The Second Gun*, about the investigation into the 1968 assassination of Robert Kennedy. Travis allowed Gerard to use the music without the vocal, hoping to release the entire song one day, without conjuring memories of that notorious tragedy.

02. "Land of the Giant Bugs" is a hospital to coffeehouse, to Travis Pike's Tea Party tune, silly, but fun, especially seeing the squirming and wriggling of its earlist, highly suggestive bedridden audiences . . .

03. "Ali Baba Ben Jones" was originally composed for the German bands *Beduin Shau*, but for this Travis channelled Slim Pickins and set the action in Rajasthan's Thar dessert, in the northwest of the Indian subcontinent.

04. "A Red-backed, Scaly, Black-bellied, Tusked, Bat-winged Dragon" was originally composed to be the title song of a proposed animated fantasy adventure Travis was developing when he was still in high school. That property outgrew the song, but Travis Pike's Tea Party fans loved it, and some even tried to dance the Charleston to it.

05. "Till the End (The Vampire Song)". The music is simple, because like many of Pike's novelty songs, the lyrics must be clear and easy to understand making the music subordinate to the storytelling. Travis said the most difficult part in it was the vampire's evil laughter!

06. Travis wrote "Oh Mama" for Travis Pike's Tea Party, and the second time they played for a weekend dance contest, it was chosen by nine out of the ten dancing couples competing for the cash prize!

07. "The Sorcerer's Waltz" was the first song Travis cut from his proposed animated fantasy. He says, "I loved the song, but my evil sorcerer would never have sung to his dragon. But we had a lot of fun orchestrating it, and I liked imitating Ron Moody's Fagin vocals in *Oliver*."

08. Recording novelty songs for this album, Travis considered "Mad About You", a song he'd recorded with Changeling Troupe in 1975, but in keeping with his movie spoofs, "Till the End (the Vampire Song)" and "Loup Garou, (the Werewolf song)," altered it dramatically to tie it in with the "bright-eyed chimp" 2011 Sci-fi thriller *Rise of the Planet of the Apes*.

09. For "Loup Garou," ('I ain't no Cajun, me,') Travis imitated the accent and expressions he'd picked up from his elderly next door neighbor, Mike, who wasn't Cajun, but grew up in New Orleans, and used to go crabbing with his Cajun friends, among whom werewolf legends were told and discussed on many a moonlit night.

10. Travis Pike's Tea Party's recording of "The Likes of You" was the b-side of their 1968 Alma Records single, with orchestration performed by moonlighting musicians from the Boston Pops. According to Travis, it was never about a living, breathing young lady, but a love song for an imaginary goddess, perfect in every respect. He also admits that for many years, he never realized that it was the love song destined for *Changeling's Return*, and while he claims he never really saw her, he was briefly knocked unconscious in that auto wreck in Germany . . .

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