

What's New at Otherworld Cottage? Harvey Kubernik's End of the Year Interview with Travis Edward Pike



LINDA SNYDER displays the 2014 Otherworld Cottage Catalog Poster. She was responsible for the Morningstone mosaic depicted on the Morningstone Music CD cover, the Tea Party Snack Platter and Feelin' Better CD covers, and she created the original of the Grumpuss depicted on the shield on the 15th Anniversary Audio Theater Edition CD.

HK: Since our last interview, now over a year ago, graphic designer [Linda Snyder](#) has formally joined your Otherworld Cottage Industries creative coalition.

TP: Yes. I've known and worked with her for years. Linda created the logo for my 1997 live performance and video production of the Blenheim Palace world premiere of [Grumpuss](#), and created the heraldic design seen on the shield on the cover of the *Grumpuss, 15th Anniversary Audio Theater Edition* CD. She created the Morningstone mosaic, incorporating some of the sympathetic magic explored in that movie musical project, and featured on the cover of the *Morningstone Music* CD. Linda also did the final, colorful cover for your Beatles book. She's a gifted illustrator, graphic designer, and sculptor, has lately been acquiring new skills in 3D digital sculpting, and she's definitely a delight to have on board.

HK: I've noticed recent changes to your websites, too.

TP: The [Kubernik's Korner](#) webpage I posted for you, when Otherworld Cottage published your book, *It Was 50 Year Ago Today THE BEATLES Invade America and Hollywood*, so your fans can stay up-to-date.

HK: Thank you for that, but I was referring to the IMDb links you've provided whenever you cite your movie industry colleagues.

TP: Naming them just wasn't enough. Your recent article, "The Wrecking Crew," about the studio musicians who actually played the tracks for some of the most popular recordings of our times, and until your cover story in *Record Collector News*, were essentially unknown, is indicative of how much of our entertainment industry is, like an iceberg, hidden below the surface. I've worked with, and been mentored by some extraordinary motion picture professionals, whose work is widely recognized as outstanding, but who are, themselves, unknown to the general public. People are dazzled by the final results, but rarely know much about the talents who make it all possible.

My department heads and mentors included line producer [Britt Lomond](#); (co-producer on *Sword of Heaven* and *Crystalstone*, UPM on *Somewhere in Time*, 1st AD on *Purple Rain*, and 2nd Unit Director on *Midnight Run*). [George Costello](#) was Britt's production designer on *Crystalstone*, but he was also the art director for *The Terminator*, and *The Sword and the Sorcerer*. You knew that in 2014, Director of Photography and Visual Effects Supervisor [Peter Anderson](#), received the *Gordon E. Sawyer Special Oscar* "For Technical Contributions that have brought Credit to the Industry." I first met him in 1982 at Disney Studios, when I was working on Betsy Baytos' production of the Betsy and Thumper promotion for the re-release of *Bambi*. Peter signed on to be DP on *Long-Grin* and *Morningstone*, and advised me regarding the time and cost of the special effects required for both. His major credits are mind-boggling, but did you know Peter was my DP for the World Premiere video production of my live performance of *Grumpuss* at Blenheim Palace in Oxfordshire, England?

I'm including their links in this interview, too, because they were part of the package I submitted to Michael Strange, that prompted his [completion bond letter](#) to me, approving my script, location report, shooting schedule, budget and me as producer-director of *Morningstone*. That proposed split-rights deal with *Paramount* fell through when the male lead's manager withdrew him from the project for medical reasons, but it does reflect the *Completion Bond Company's* confidence in the knowledge, experience, and skill of my department heads, all of whom signed off on the package assembled by my daughter, Lisa, and me.

HK: You also posted complete versions of your songs for public audition on YouTube and set up international distribution and marketing.

TP: When I learned that the UK publication, *Shindig Magazine* was doing a review of my book that would be out in late October, I wanted to have the book and CDs available overseas by the time the review hit the streets. When I looked into it, I was confronted by a plethora of forms, rules, and regulations governing international trade and it became apparent that to meet my goal, I needed to partner with an

international distributor already doing business in my target markets. *CD Baby* and *Book Baby* fit the bill and Otherworld Cottage's catalog is now listed in Western Europe, Japan and the UK.

As a matter of fact, [CDBaby put my entire current catalog of complete songs available for audition on YouTube](#). I had been discussing putting a song or two from each album up on *Youtube*, with Adam, my brother and co-producer, but while we were still mulling over which ones and when, *CDBaby* did it.

HK: The magazine issue is history, now. Are you pleased with the [3 star Shindig review](#)?

TP: Extremely pleased. *Shindig* is a major music magazine, regularly publishing interviews with bands new and old, and reviewing albums, compilations and re-releases of material from way back when, right up to the present day. Although I starred in the 1966 rock music movie *Feelin' Good*, and was briefly featured on a short-lived Boston, *WBZ-TV* series in 1968, I was almost exclusively a concert performer, with only a single, 45 rpm record release. Unlike your new book, *Neil Young: Heart of Gold*, about an internationally famous singer, songwriter and recording artist, my book about my early career has no built-in celebrity market.

When, in Tom Patterson's *Shindig* review, he describes the book as "one man's short, sweet and refreshingly cheerful tale of snatching defeat from the jaws of victory," it's high praise indeed for an unknown. Of my lyrics and stories, he writes they "have a pleasing Edward Lear/Lewis Carroll nonsense quality to them," and concludes, "The main interest for the casual reader will be the first half with its tales of filling out dancehalls in Pomona, blowing Moby Grape off the stage at *The Psychedelic Supermarket* in Boston and turning down the chance to record 'Green Tambourine' a month before The Lemon Pipers took it to the top of the charts."

My only reservation is that it reads like my story ended in 1974. It didn't. I'm still around and with help from my co-producer brother Adam, who engineers our sessions, plays all kinds of instrumental parts, contributes to the arrangements, and generally has made it possible for me to record my back catalog of audience favorites, music is again, after all these years, a priority for me. When you come right down to it, I'm a virtual unknown in this century, so a three star review of my book is definitely encouraging. And now, I'm beginning to get requests for interviews and review copies of both my book and my CDs.

HK: The songs in the five related albums you released were popular with your audiences in the sixties. A lot has changed since then. Do you think your songs will resonate with today's audiences?

TP: I certainly hope so. It was during my 1963-64 tour of duty in Germany, that music went from being a pastime to a potential career. Then, I was singing songs by Elvis, Little Richard, Ray Charles, Chuck Berry, and the list goes on.

When I was shipped back to the States, the first audiences exposed to my original songs were other hospitalized enlisted men. I entertained them with parodies of current hits, original novelty songs, and ballads that proved to be just as popular with the high school and college crowds that frequented the Boston coffeehouses. When, at 21, I formed Travis Pike and the Boston Massacre (later Travis Pike's Tea Party), I was composing songs for my generation. I won't be too surprised if they appeal to teens and twenty-somethings today, because all the crushing and exhilarating emotions of youth in transition that appealed to my audiences back then, still confound and thrill their grandchildren.

And I've become aware of another audience for my work -- music collectors of all ages, who simply prefer the sounds and themes of the sixties. More than 20 years my junior, Adam falls into that demographic. He digs the sounds and vitality of mid-sixties music. The revelation is that until we started recording together, he had never heard most of my songs, so I benefitted greatly from him bringing fresh ears to the productions.

HK: The genesis of the songs on the Feelin' Better and Reconstructed Coffeehouse Blues albums go back half a century, and predate the songs on Travis Edward Pike's Tea Party Snack Platter. Why did you choose to record it first?

TP: Travis Pike's Tea Party was my group during the most prolific period of my musical career. Our performances were well attended. We were singled out in newspapers and magazines, and featured in promotional engagements for various organizations. We were even, however briefly, the house band for a TV show.

I had achieved regional notoriety from starring in the rock music movie [Feelin' Good](#), which had its world premiere at the Paramount Theater in Boston, so when I decided to put together a new group of my own, I started my recruiting at Boston's famous *Berklee School of Music*. I was introduced to the outstanding classical guitarist, Karl Garrett, who, invited to study classical guitar in Spain with Andre Segovia, was about to drop out in his senior year. Karl was not only a fantastic player, he had studied arrangement and could sing backup, too. I would not be surprised to learn that Karl's choosing me over Segovia might have had a lot to do with cost of continuing his studies in Spain, but I know he genuinely liked my songs, too.

Our bass player, Mikey Joe, found us. He'd been in a high school band I performed with once a few years earlier, and had looked me up in the hope that he could talk me into forming a group with him. Karl auditioned and passed Mikey Joe -- which turned out to be a really good thing, because Mikey Joe knew where to find the rest of the roster. He introduced us to singer-rhythm guitarist, George Brooks, and ex-Navy band drummer, Uncle Phil. They were out of work, having lost all their equipment, when the club in which they were playing was firebombed. We helped them get back on their feet, and with Karl's talent, my notoriety and original songs, we closed the deal.

I originally arranged the songs on the *Tea Party Snack Platter* with and for them, and I wanted to recreate our authentic sixties sound for the album. Overdubbing the harmonies, I even sought to sing the parts the way George and Karl sang them. Adam and I managed to come close, although we added strings and keyboards never heard in our live sixties performances, but in fairness, when Travis Pike's Tea Party recorded "The Likes of You," (B side of the "If I Didn't Love You Girl" 45 single), we brought in players from the *Boston Pops* for the strings and woodwinds, so this recording is probably close to what Travis Pike's Tea Party would have done, had we recorded the album back then.



HK: Where are they today? Are you still in touch with any of them?

TP: After we broke up, Mikey Joe gave up music. Last I heard, he was still living in Southern California. George died of cancer years ago and Uncle Phil is playing drums in a jazz combo on Cape Cod. I'm happy to report that [Karl Garrett](#) is a highly-respected and influential member of the music community, teaching, and playing classical guitar concerts in Lower Bucks County, Pennsylvania.

HK: The 1966 movie, *Feelin' Good*, that you starred in, featured eight of your original songs, and you have said that movie was the genesis of your *Feelin' Better* CD.

TP: Several songs in my *Feelin' Better* album were featured in *Feelin' Good*, but I credit their genesis to my 1964 German-Italian Showband, The Five Beats. While in Chelsea Naval Hospital, I wrote the songs for them, thinking that when I recovered, I would go back to Germany and take up where I left off. I never did, but the songs I wrote for them originally called for saxophone parts.

The Brattle Street East (aka Oedipus and His Mothers), who played the songs in the movie, didn't have a sax player, so my original arrangements were never heard until now. Adam had heard the songs from the movie, but had never heard The Five Beats. His recording studio experience was certainly more current than mine, and he recommended

we bring in Chris Woodcock for the saxophone parts and play the songs the way I originally intended. For the lead guitar parts on "Cold, Cold Morning," and "Rock 'n' Roll," Adam put me in touch with Jon DuFresne. Chris ended up playing on seven of the songs, including the two with Jon, and their improvisations perfectly captured the Five Beats Zeitgeist. Purist Five Beats fans might protest that we had no keyboards in that band, but these songs, never played by The Five Beats, profit greatly from Adam's inspired keyboard parts. As for changing the title song, "Feelin' Good" (recorded by the Montclairs), belongs to them and to the movie. The "Feelin' Better" title song belongs to this new album and the music collectors of today.



Click photo to see newsreel of downtown Boston Paramount Theater *Feelin' Good* world premiere.

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  **Star-Club**
 Hamburg-St. Pauli

HK: I'm guessing that you wrote the songs on Reconstructed Coffeehouse Blues between the other two.

TP: Not altogether. *Reconstructed Coffeehouse Blues* also features songs composed during my time in post-op rehab in Chelsea Naval Hospital. By the time I started playing in coffeehouses, I had been discharged, and the anti-Vietnam war movement was growing. Fortunately for me, my music was one thing that seemed to bridge the gap between the active duty servicemen and the war protesters.

As I've said, my songs were almost exclusively heard in live concert performances, where I did all the singing, picking and strumming on my own. For some songs, my picking would have been the entire accompaniment in a coffeehouse venue. My picking isn't what it used to be, but recording with Adam, I'm not limited to what I can do on my own. When I had trouble finger-picking "Sing a Song of Blues," Adam flat picked it for me – and when I heard it, I preferred his flat-picking. I recorded a scratch track to introduce Adam to "Gray Day Lady." During playback, Adam came up with the idea of the moaning fretless bass line, and when I heard it, it knocked me over. Still working with the scratch track, he then sat down at the keyboard and came up with the piano groove you hear now.



LAYING DOWN THE BONES

Prior to recording a scratch track, (placeholder demo recording), Travis, on guitar, introduces Adam, on keyboard, to another of his original songs.

TP: Right from the start, Adam and I both wanted my old friend, brilliant keyboard maestro, and founding director of the [Academy of Music for the Blind](#), David Pinto, to play "She's Gonna Be a Woman Some Day." He did, and the energy at that session was infectious and inspiring -- David on piano, Adam on bass and me, howling away in the booth. I hear it in the finished tracks.

As for "Don't You Care At All," to recapture the spirit of its time and place, in this time and place, I brought in a growing chorus of voices, similar to the growing voices raised in protest against the futility and horror of the Vietnam War. Adam and I then constructed the "instrumental release" entirely of sound effects of helicopter gunships, jets, rockets

and napalm, familiar enough to those of us who lived through that era and finally, at the end of the song, as the chorus fades, even as those protest voices faded over time, it is my voice, alone, keeping these memories alive.

HK: There were many protest songs of the Vietnam era, mostly in the folk, rock or R&B tradition. Your personal commentary is stylishly unique, even to the point of orchestrating real combat audio effects into your music and lyrics. We sometimes forget that you served in the military from 1963-1966, while that war was veering into a whole new level of engagement.

TP: I served, yes, but the closest I came to the war was entertaining our wounded on military hospital wards. I heard their stories from their own lips, and understood their bewilderment when their sacrifices were vilified by their civilian peers. Tough times, those, but when Walter Cronkite's report aired, following the Tet Offensive in January, 1968, it was not only a turning point in US policy and commitment, but inspired my song, "Don't You Care At All." That was the year I moved to West Covina, California, and met my first California friend at a Monday night, coffeehouse-style performance in *Guru-V* on Arrow Highway in Glendora, where he heard my song.

That same year, I invited him to my New Year's Eve bash, and we celebrated the expiration of his eligibility for the draft. On January 2nd, 1969, he called to say he'd received his draft notice, posted just before his eligibility expired. He served in Vietnam, but happily returned safely and remains a special friend to this day. I never knew how much that song meant to him until, during a visit years later, he asked me to sing it again. While I was trying to remember how it started and what key it was in, he hummed it for me and even fed me the lyrics. The song had never been recorded, the band never played it, and I only played it rarely, so I was amazed that he remembered it so well. But that's what musical spells are, aren't they? Locked away in our unconscious, they trigger memories of other times, other people, other places, surprising us at odd times, or more frequently, when good friends get together.

HK: That gave me chills. Are you still in contact with him?

TP: Yes. He lives in San Diego now, but he's coming up to visit over the holidays.

HK: So, what's it like to be producing and totally immersed in career retrospective products?

TP: Until this year, my music and I had been an unrecorded time capsule. Now that they're recorded, the songs may live forever, but I still have an unknown, but approaching expiration date. I had moved on in my life and all this was fading memories – memories that my daughter Lisa pointed out, would die with me if I didn't record them. She then suggested, ever so sweetly, that my music might pay the tuition for my grandchildren's college educations. So naturally, being a good grandpa, I put them both to work!



My grandsons, Robert Maxwell Gunner on French Horn and Daniel Gregory Gunner on Trumpet, played parts in “[The Andalusian Bride Suite](#),” to be featured on my next album.

And that’s really how it all began. I’m grateful for Lisa’s nudge, and the opportunity I have had to work with my brother, Adam. I’m old enough to be his father, and with so much time and distance between us, it has been a joy to get to know him better, to learn just how incredibly talented he really is, and to discover what a genuinely wonderful man he has become. It has brought part of our far-flung family together, and that’s a very good thing.

As for the production, the digital environment in Adam’s studio makes it possible for us to create all the sounds we desire, at a cost we can afford. Both of us come from an earlier analog recording tradition, and incorporate elements of it in our recordings. Not everything gets plugged directly into the board. Not everything is sampled. Vocals are, by their nature, necessarily analog. We mike amplifiers, horns, electric guitar, and bass, too, but we also build entire sections from samples played to fill out the live recordings, without which technology, we could never have afforded to record the arrangements. Adam’s digital samples library allows us to record piano, pipe organ, harmonium or harpsichord at will. And because it is all eventually digital, the mixing and sweetening process is more cost effective than ever before. During sweetening, we may add flutes, a triangle, or horns if we feel they would benefit the arrangement – and take them back out, if they don’t.

And finally, just so you know, my next album, not quite finished and as yet untitled, is outside the scope of that “Odd Tales and Wonders” decade. Some of the songs were originally intended for “Changeling,” the abandoned rock opera I composed in 1974, but six of the eleven can only be described as new this year. Happily, at 70, I finally had both the experience and insight to be able to compose “The Lovely Girl I Married,” dedicated to my wife, Judy. And “Puka Puka Gaga Doody” makes it clear that my penchant for novelty songs still runs strong, but once you turn the rock ‘n’ roll back on, it’s hard to turn it off, and I’ve got several new rockers in the next album, too.

HK: So you’re back to songwriting now?

TP: This year I was. As for the future, I really don’t know. I suppose it depends on how well the albums do, but I have a full schedule of narrative writing ahead of me, and I need to make time to adapt the best of my several original screenplay properties into novels. They are every bit as threatened by time-capsule constraints as was my music.

HK: I want to come back, sometime during the holidays, to learn more about your almost-finished new album, recorded with your engineer/co-producer brother, Adam, slated for an early 2016 release.

TP: I’m free on the 21st, if the day before Winter Solstice sound auspicious to you?

HK: You’re on! And one of these days, you’ve got to tell me about this thing!



Harvey Kubernik examines Linda Snyder’s 3/4 scale replica of a Baryonyx fossil skull.

TP: I will . . . but today is not that day . . .

- <http://www.oddtalesandwonders.com>
- <http://www.otherworldcottage.com>
- <http://www.travisedwardpike.com>
- <http://www.morningstone.com>
- <http://www.grumpuss.com>
- <http://www.long-grin.com>

