

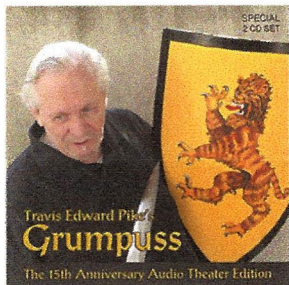
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Grumpuss

By Travis Edward Pike



I received an email not too long ago from a Mr. Travis Edward Pike regarding his new video/audio production of a children's story titled "Grumpuss." He described his work as, "An epic narrative fantasy adventure told entirely from memory and entirely in rhyme." After listening to the 2-cassette audio production, I can say with some enthusiasm that his brief description does not do this piece justice.

Grumpuss is the story of Sir Ellery, a vain, petty knight who is called from idle luxury to save the kingdom from the dread and terrible Grumpuss. What is a Grumpuss, you ask?

"A Grumpuss is not like a dragon...
Rather more like a large surly cat,
With tremendous paws and gigantic claws
And jaws that can crush armor flat!"

Sir Ellery is given plenty of advice on how to deal with a Grumpuss, but true to his glory-besotted nature, he ignores all of it. He finds the Grumpuss without too much trouble, and despite a few funny and bumbling run-ins with the beast, decides that it would be in his best interest to tame the great cat and return it to the King's court. Dazzled by his dreams of fame and glory, he attempts to teach it manners. But, alas, on the trip back to the King, Sir Ellery makes a terrible mistake and does precisely what he was warned not to do earlier in the story. What happens then? Well, I'll save the rest of the story for Travis Edward Pike to tell.

When I was a young teenager, a family friend gave me a cassette of T.S. Eliot reading selections of "Old Possum's Book of Practical Cats." I still have the set, saved carefully away and played rarely in hopes that it won't self-destruct in my tape deck. After listening to Grumpuss, I was inspired to listen to Eliot extol the virtues of the Jellicle cat. Pike's Grumpuss is very easy to compare to that old recording of "...Practical Cats." Both recordings were "one man shows" as it were, and both read their verse with an eye for character that only the author can have. Both have that mythic quality of fairy-tale wonder, and it's not difficult to say that Grumpuss holds up well to the comparison.

Pike is an amazing storyteller. His talent is incredibly flexible, giving a unique voice to every character in the story. This is no flat poetry reading; it's audio theatre at its best. The production of the audiocassette is flawlessly professional and the cassettes are attractively packaged in a paperback-sized case, which will slip easily into your bookshelf.

I'm almost disappointed in myself that I didn't order the video production of Grumpuss. On the Grumpuss web site, there are excerpts from the video and photos available, as well as a delightful commentary on the filming of the production. I was amazed that the live production was recited from memory. This kind of storytelling is all but dead in our culture and it takes a very special kind of dedication to keep the oral tradition alive.

Bravo, Travis Edward Pike!

I highly recommend that you purchase Grumpuss for yourself and your children. Grumpuss is aimed squarely at kids, and while adults can (obviously) enjoy it, it takes the magic of a child's imagination to make this story work.

Since this review was written in May, 2000, the dual cassette version has been discontinued. The remastered Dual CD *Grumpuss 15th Anniversary Audio Theater Edition* is now available at [CDBaby](http://www.CDBaby.com), [Amazon](http://www.amazon.com), and through other select retailers worldwide. To audition clips from the CD edition on Youtube click this link, <http://www.grumpuss.com/AUDSAMPLES.html>.