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## swag of yarns

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## *Grumpuss*

Travis Edward Pike

A Review by Lai Ha

A few months ago there was a very pleasant surprise in the post -- two small packages from the USA. They brought a very special aspect of storytelling into my life. The first package contained a videotape and two audiotapes and was from Travis Edward Pike with his romantic tale of a hapless knight in search of honour and adventure.

As I listened to the audio tapes an image grew in my mind of a gaunt Don Quixote type of knight with his bony horse--a knight who daydreamed so much of his adventure he didn't listen to instructions or advice.

This fantasy tale of hunting the Grumpuss, an animal so dangerous, so gigantic it was more fearsome than a dragon and had not been seen by man for many years. His instructions were to seek and destroy. The tale is told in rhyme with minimal use of sound effects and with an orchestral backing. Travis is responsible for the composition of both the music and verse. For approximately 84 minutes his voice carries you into another world.

It was hard to listen to the complete tape in one go--children, phone and animals conspired against total relaxation. But Travis is such an excellent and obviously experienced teller, that the interruptions did not break the continuity of the tale at all. These tapes should definitely be listened to on a winter's afternoon with a good glass of red wine and a fire burning in the hearth. This is a storytelling experience from a great teller and true master of this medium.

The rest of the package was a videotape presenting a different aspect of Grumpuss. The same tale, the same teller, the same music but a different world altogether. This was a lesson in how a different type of media can change the whole aspect for the listener/viewer. Gone were my gaunt knight and the stark landscape of my imagination--instead a minstrel in a magic forest dressed in simple attire carrying a traveling pouch entered my life.

Travis Edward Pike shows that he knows how to work to a camera. He controlled the stage space with the barest of movements and gestures, yet he filled the screen with his voice and presence. It was not just a professional entertaining the audience, but a traveller sharing his experiences with a friend. The Fairy Queen and her three attendant changeling children although beautiful, became part of the scenery as the tale unfolded. A new tale--but the same tale, it was all in Travis' masterly command of his craft.

The only disappointing note for me was the ending. The magic died and the Fairy Queen and the Minstrel became mere modern day mortals. The magic forest was again Blenheim Palace, England. The time was no longer the Middle Ages but November 1997.

Both the video and the audio were fantastic experiences. The video won the 1999 INTERCOM Silver Plaque for Special Achievement--Writing Award from the Chicago FilmFest. The presentations are a storyteller's dream and are suitable for all except the very young. Get them if you can or persuade your local library to get copies. Visit the website on [www.grumpuss.com](http://www.grumpuss.com). It's a must for . . .

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.

**EDITORIAL NOTE:** Since this review appeared, Grumpuss is no longer available on audio or video cassettes. The remastered audio of *Grumpuss, The 15th Anniversary Audio Theater Edition* is now available in a dual CD format at [CDBaby.com](http://CDBaby.com). Audition their clips by clicking on these links from the [Grumpuss 20th Anniversary Platinum Edition on DVD](#) or the [Grumpuss 15th Anniversary Audio Theater Edition](#). Both sold on Amazon.com and by other select retailers, worldwide. And if you visit the [Grumpuss Legacy Page](#), you'll learn all about the key people, the production, the selection of Blenheim Palace, reviews, awards, and much more!