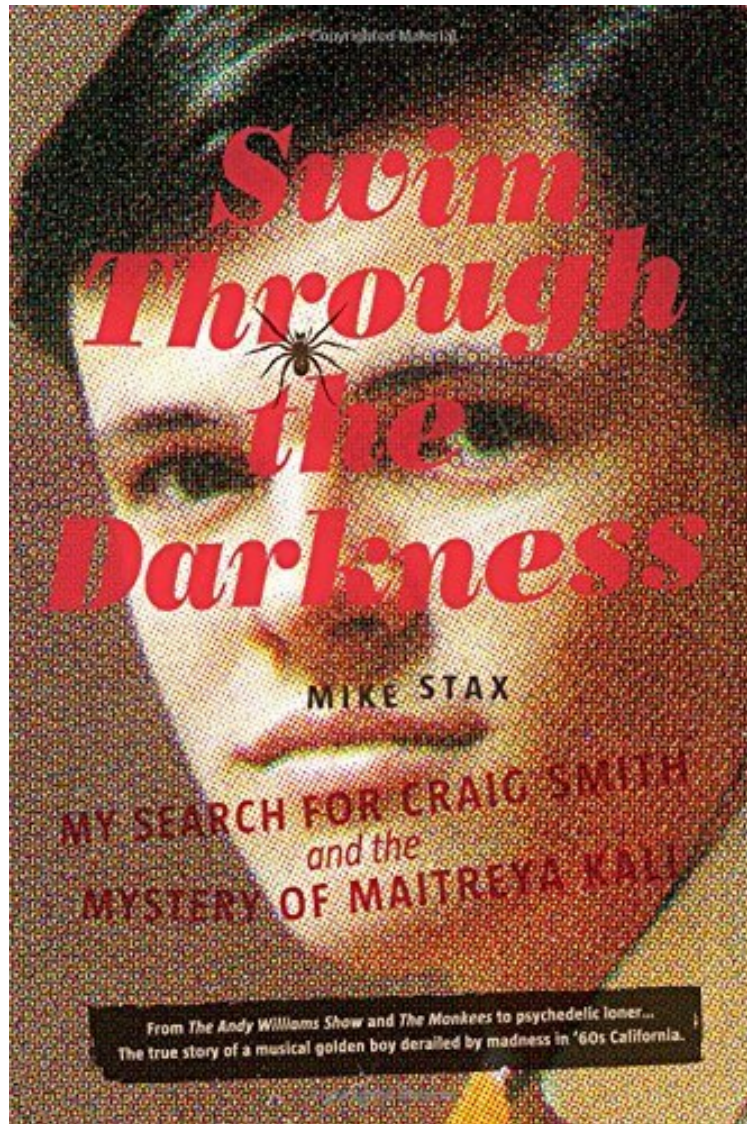


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Swim Through the Darkness: My Search for Craig Smith and the Mystery of Maitreya Kali

Mike Stax

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Mike Stax : Swim Through the Darkness: My Search for Craig Smith and the Mystery of Maitreya Kali before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Swim Through the Darkness: My Search for Craig Smith and the Mystery of Maitreya Kali:

6 of 6 people found the following review helpful. What a trip.By L. NewmanI don't know that my review will do this book the justice that it deserves, but I will try.This book was captivating, heart-wrenching, well-researched, and well-

written. I was incredibly excited when I found out about the book even though I'd never heard of Craig Smith, The Happeners, the Good Time Singers, Penny Arkade, or Maitreya Kali. The one thing I HAD heard was Salesman, the song by the Monkees. I've always liked that song, and once I found out there was an involved back story to the man that had written it, I immediately wanted to know more. A Google search told me that Mike Stax was the authority on this story (if there was an authority, that is), and that this book was forthcoming. I hesitated ordering it before any reviews were posted because so often books on mysterious figures are poorly written, even more poorly edited, and cobbled together from a collection of Internet searches rather than from any real research. But I took the plunge and ordered it because I just could not wait. I was not disappointed. I had a hard time putting the book down once I picked it up. Mike Stax laid out all the facts he's been able to find over 15 years of research, and admitted when things were hazy or outright missing. He pointed out discrepancies found between dates and recollections and even offered possible reasons for those discrepancies when he was able. The result is a picture of a talented, tortured, and flawed man who was very human. His life of promise, talent, and incredible connections was, after a horrific and unclear incident overseas, traded in for one of obscurity and solitude. But thanks to Mr. Stax, Craig Smith has found new life and new respect. Please order the book.

7 of 7 people found the following review helpful. Through the Past, Darkly By James Marinovich Anyone already familiar with Mike Stax's features in Ugly Things Magazine recognize him as one of the finest researchers in the field of musical (primarily 60s and 70s) history, as well as prose stylist par excellence. But there is another, perhaps even more important, quality which makes Stax's work indispensable: his ability to understand and sympathize with both his subject matters and the social milieu in which they moved. A compassion for the human condition is expressed throughout his works, a vibrant humanism which accompanies--and, no doubt, contributes to--his talent for presenting the past as it actually existed (opposed to other, inferior, commentators on the 60s and 70s, who use their contemporary sensibilities and prejudices to interpret the past rather than reveal it). Stax brings the aforementioned abilities to his latest book, Swim Through The Darkness, which chronicles the life of Craig Smith, Southern Californian musical artist whose strange trajectory led him from Andy Williams's Good Time Singer to member of the Mike Nesmith-produced group Penny Arkade, to bizarre incarnation as psychonaut Maitreya Kali, to anonymous denizen of LAs homeless community. The story had its beginnings as a feature in Ugly Things, and reads as an extended version of the same. The 226 pages are filled with rare photos as well as Stax's noble attempt to solve the many mysteries of Smith's life. I say attempt because, meticulously researched and fact-checked as it is, still, Swim Through The Darkness contains many gaps--inevitable gaps, perhaps, given the subject, an individual who for at least the second half of his life lived in realms tangential at best to the consensus reality where most of us presumably dwell, realms significantly lacking in the linearity required for recording history (see Maitreya Kali's liner notes on his two albums, which most likely represent his attempt to do so)--ultimately, as Stax continuously acknowledges, it presents a puzzle box with missing pieces. No doubt some readers will come away from the book with the same sense of frustration and loss an incomplete puzzle brings. But don't allow such reflection to keep you from reading this wonderful book: like all of Mike Stax's finest work, Swim Through The Darkness serves most admirably as a time machine, taking you to a past dimension where the people are real and their lives poignantly relevant to ours in the present day.

4 of 4 people found the following review helpful. If you're into 60s music and culture, you NEED to read this book even if you've never heard of Craig Smith! By Doug Long Even though a study of 60s rock and roll and culture has been an ongoing quest for me since I was about 8 years old, I had never heard of Craig Smith until reading an article about the Clinger Sisters penned by Mike Stax in the Spring/Summer 2015 issue (#39) of his Ugly Things magazine. The sisters Mike interviewed described Craig as this fun loving, charismatic guy who was an immensely talented musician and a great performer who was wonderful on stage. A reference was made to an article Mike had written about him in a previous issue that I'd missed. Craig had drifted in and out of their lives a few times, and I just had this feeling there was maybe quite a bit to this guy's story that I wanted to know. But, time passed and I pretty much forgot about Craig Smith- until Mike announced the imminent release of this book. After reading that he had spent 15 YEARS not only tracking down the details of Craig's life and music, but all that very same amount of time trying to actually FIND the man himself, and that Craig had gone through some type of major personality change that turned him from a happy go lucky young man into a man who genuinely believed he was the messiah sent to save all mankind... well, then I HAD to know. After getting the book, I immediately started reading it and could hardly put it down! It's a very enthralling, poignant, and at times very sad story, and Mike's dogged attention to detail and writing style make you not hardly be able to wait to see what happens on the next page. This is honestly one of the best books I've ever read. I did not want it to end. When you read it, you'll find out why.

Craig Smith was a 1960s golden boy good looking, charismatic, outgoing; a preternaturally gifted musician and songwriter whose songs were recorded by some of the biggest names in entertainment Andy Williams, Glen Campbell, the Monkees. His future success seemed assured, until an unexpected turn of events plunged him into a terrifying darkness. Clean-cut Craig Smith became Maitreya Kali, the self-proclaimed psychedelic Messiah. He laid out his poignant, disturbing schizophrenic vision on a sprawling self-released double-album before disappearing completely. Author Mike Stax spent fifteen years piecing together the mystery of Maitreya Kali, uncovering one of the strangest

and most tragic untold stories of the 1960s and 70s. *Swim Through the Darkness* reveals author Stax's fifteen year quest in tracking down this strange saga of American pop culture. Included in the story are Smith's close ties to the Monkees, particularly Mike Nesmith, who produced and promoted Smith's band, Penny Arkade. Also covered are the bizarre self-released albums he made as Maitreya Kali, which now command thousands of dollars among psychedelic music collectors. Purchasers of this book will also receive a code to be able to download Smith's music in all its obscure and variant styles.

To complete *Swim Through the Darkness*, Mike Stax spent fifteen years tracking people down for interviews, and he was able to get information from what seems like practically ALL of Smith/Maitreya's past associates (a notable exception being Mike Love). The amount of detail presented is amazing, impressively reconciling lore with reality through eyewitness testimony. "Dangerous Minds