Clarion Review

Autobiography & Memoir

The Pied Piper of Woodstock
Artie Kornfeld
Spirit of the Woodstock Nation
978-0-615-32599-6
Five Stars (out of Five)

More than a mere three days of peace, love, mud, and music, the 1969 Woodstock Music & Art Festival was a cultural landmark in a tumultuous decade. It was the brainchild of Artie Kornfeld, songwriter, music producer, and so-called "Pied Piper of Woodstock." In his memoir, Kornfeld traces his life from early musical prodigy to organizer of the concert that changed the country.

Pied Piper begins when Kornfeld was a musically gifted child raised by a radical socialist mother and a union activist father. Kornfeld became the youngest VP at Capitol Records at the age of twenty-one, and by twenty-four he had written more than seventy-five songs that hit the Billboard charts. Kornfeld's ebullient, swiftly paced prose takes readers nimbly through his pre-Woodstock years, portraying his achievements as formative steps on the way to his crowning glory—Woodstock.

Pied Piper details every step in the development of the momentous festival. From booking the acts to securing a venue, each piece of the process is described in a casual, intimate tone that draws in the reader. The meat of the book comes in long chapters each devoted to one day at Woodstock, with subsections for each performer that include lively character sketches. True to activist form, Kornfeld expounds on the Woodstock ethos of "peace and music" and why it was so important.

Kornfeld's book is more than a simple memoir of one of the most important concerts in U.S. history; it is also a detailed, personal account of the 1960s' rock culture, music, and personalities. The text contains historical photographs and news clippings about key players on the Woodstock scene. Also included are lyrics from Kornfeld's rock songs and full-color reproductions of dreamy, pacifist paintings by Jim Warren. *Pied Piper* provides a panoramic, comprehensive collage of the times and people (complete with a detailed index at the end).

With a highly personal and chatty style, *Pied Piper* uses a wealth of detail to create

excitement as the intricate concert preparations come to fruition. A constant stream of anecdotes brings to life the personalities of the festival without becoming bogged down in minutiae or confusing the reader. This is one book that really makes readers feel like they were there.

As a valuable historical document of an important concert and a joyful paean to the revolutionary spirit of an era, *The Pied Piper of Woodstock* will engross historians, rock lovers, and casual readers alike.