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Photographs by Barry Z. Levine

THE WOODSTOCK

STORY BOOK:

Special 40th Anniversary Edition

BookSurge (154 pp.)

January 29, 2009

ISBN: 978-1-4392-2261-4

A homemade brew of whimsical rhymes and personal photos from the historic hippie event that Levine attended as the still photographer for the Academy Award-winning documentary *Woodstock*.

This is an incredible all-access pass to the music and art fair that came to be known solely as Woodstock. With “you are there” photos, from aerial views of endless bodies sardine-packed like a Spencer Tunick happening, to close-ups of Hendrix, to an exquisite shot of Arlo Guthrie’s shoes reflected in a puddle of water above the caption, “Rain and a wet stage were a constant factor but didn’t stop Arlo from performing,” the authors have created an intimate time capsule with this book. The details and tidbits are highly specific (“The Woodstock security were called ‘Polites,’ not Police,” while another page features a then-pregnant Joan Baez and Ravi Shankar chatting backstage accompanied by a caption that explains that her husband was in jail for draft resistance), allowing for the festival to be framed inside its all-important, Vietnam-era context. Because *Woodstock* is told through a collage of photos, song lyrics and rhyming text, it also has a homespun scrapbook vibe, which feels right for recounting a personal communal experience. For example, one page reads, “Richie Havens launched the great show / ‘fore other performers were ready to go / Holding the crowd for nearly three hours / ‘til ‘Motherless Child’ rang out from the towers” in bold type next to a shot of Havens on guitar. Smaller print explains, “Because the other acts hadn’t arrived, Richie Havens was asked to open the show. His performance set the tone for all that followed.” Even if readers are not familiar with Havens or his music, the vivid picture of this artist drawn through word and image is nonetheless mesmerizing. From The Grateful Dead’s Jerry Garcia smiling behind a “For Rent” sign, to towheaded toddlers playing naked around a drum set during a break, the peace and love essence of Woodstock rings out loud and clear.

Like Sly and the Family Stone “taking ‘them’ higher” here, the authors likewise reach for the sky.

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