



The Pied Piper

Harold Schechter

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With makeup and an affected Elvis pout, Tucson's Charlie Schmid was a crude parody of a bad-boy heartthrob. In 1964, he still had a hold on girls who'd follow him anywhere. He murdered three of them.

It was the dawn of the free-love movement—perfect for a magnetic madman who'd also foreshadow its end a few years later in the malignant charisma of Charles Manson. The inspiration for a classic story by Joyce Carol Oates, Schmid, the most bizarre serial killer of any era, was the epitome of a narcissist flattered into believing he could get away with murder.

The Pied Piper is part of *Bloodlands*, a chilling collection of short page-turning historical narratives from bestselling true-crime master Harold Schechter. Spanning a century in our nation's murderous past, Schechter resurrects nearly forgotten tales of madmen and thrill-killers that dominated the most sensational headlines of their day.

The Pied Piper Details

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From Reader Review The Pied Piper for online ebook

Rob says

Ok read...

The story was informative but I felt it lacked serious depth. The writing seemed elementary and was riddled with modern slang “they tooled around in their car”. I was unsure if the writer was trying to be reflective of the times? I used this type of language when I was a kid in the 90’s, as this was just a single example. The story doesn’t provide much in the way of the character’s backgrounds or victim’s full story. I found it hard to connect as a reader or to become vested in the victims. It’s a shame because I know they were real people that were more than simple props for this story’s telling. I everything could have been more powerfully delivered if told by a more thoughtful author.

Nicole Dunton says

This one could have used a little more details in my opinion. It was more he said she said than anything. But maybe that's because that was how the case was presented. Who knows? It was a very interesting tale. Makes you wonder what goes through people's heads. I do plan to research not only this but the tales from all six of these stories. As an empath, some of the harsh realities in this series were very hard to stomach and get my head around. I trooped through them anyways. I recommend it to anybody who thinks they can stomach the horrible way humans treat other humans. It's fascinating to discover things that are known today dating so far back.

Stephanie ((Strazzybooks)) says

Part of Amazon's Bloodlands collection (of which I plan to read most), where Schechter wrote 6 short stories of infamous American crimes. This one introduced me to Charles Schmid, aka "The Pied Piper", a serial killer in the 1960s. I didn't know about this killer so it was interesting to learn, though the audio book version was a bit dry.

Ursula Johnson says

Psychotic Pied Piper's Story

This is another excellent chapter in the Bloodlands series. The Pied Piper recounts a series of murders by a psychopath from Arizona. A riveting read and superb listen, it paints a portrait of restless teens led astray and manipulated into trouble. At one time 30 people knew that some of the missing girls were dead and said nothing to authorities about it. Even after the killer was caught and unfortunately spared the death penalty he so richly deserved, he made friends with a professor of poetry. The professor began a thirty year program working with inmates. Killer Schmidt was brutally assaulted and ultimately died of his wounds. Only the killer's mother and the instructor mourned him. I find it distressing that the professor became such good

friends with this fiend. A thrilling read and another superb narrative performance by Steven Weber.

Andrea says

Another short story in this collection that is perhaps most notable for its later literary influence. This is the story of a Tucson wanna be heartthrob who killed at least three girls. I was familiar with this story from an episode of “A Crime to Remember” but this telling was engaging and easy to follow. I ended up docking a star for the author’s addition of his own interaction with the killer and the killer’s later poetic (?) turn. It just seemed an odd ending as was the very brief mention of this true story’s role in inspiring a Joyce Carol Oates’ work.

Dee Cherry says

Good information given as I've never heard of this serial killer before. He definitely fit the criteria as it was sad reading about the lives lost.

Danielle Bonam says

Harold Schechter is hands down the greatest True Crime author. His research is all encompassing, I cannot imagine how he finds the time to research every single tid-bit of a crime, but he does and we reap the benefit.

In his latest Amazon Kindle Collection, The Bloodlands, Schechter explores 6(ish) murders of early American history. I say 6(ish) because although each story has a central murder, they all look at other comparable killings and overarching themes when applicable.

The Bloodlands Collection is also available with audio and I was able to listen to all 6 short stories during a long car ride and was not bored for a moment. Like the other Schechter tales, he examines all accounts and facts related to each case. I truly loved listening to these long forgotten murders that shaped American history, thought and culture.

Minke says

Interesting story I never heard of before.

Ronnie Cramer says

The strange tale of a murderous would-be teen idol in 1960s Tucson, Arizona.

Amber Machado says

This was a quick read. A lot of information and while the story could have used more details for the length if the story the details were enough. Good read

Stacy Croushorn says

True story

This book tells the true story of a murderer in the early 60's. Very interesting story. Joyce Carroll Oates wrote a short story based on this murderer.

Netanella says

*Hey, c'mon, babe Follow me
I'm the Pied Piper
And I'll show you where it's at*
- lyrics to a popular song at the time

"The Pied Piper" is a very interesting account of a serial killer in the 1960's in Tucson, Arizona, named Charles Schmid, or Smitty to those who knew him. My interest was piqued partly because I had never heard of the Pied Piper, so called because of his charismatic ability to get the local teenagers to follow him like lapdogs. I also was intrigued due to Smitty's obsession with his appearance. Apparently in imitation of his idol Elvis, Smitty would dye his hair black, add mascara and pancake makeup to his face, paint a beauty mark that looked like a greasy mole, and affect a pouty snarl. In an effort to add three inches to his height, he would stuff his boots with empty cans and newspaper - this made him walking funny.

You know, if it looks like a freak, walks like a freak....

You get the picture. He killed three young women for the kicks. Eventually his friends ratted him out, and he was tried, convicted and sentenced to the gas chamber, which was later commuted to life in prison. Eventually, he was murdered by a pair of convicts with some grudge. The community in Tucson, I'm sure, is grateful for that act.

I enjoyed this book, and look forward to more of this series.

The story of Smitty was the inspiration for Joyce Carol Oates' "Where Are You Going, Where Have You Been?"

Ellie Midwood says

This was the last book in the series which I didn't want to end! The Pied Piper offers a glimpse at the most bizarre serial killer, Charlie Schmid, a wanna-be-Elvis, self-proclaimed bad boy, who started killing solely for the thrill of it. The most interesting part was the number of followers that kept growing around him, who not only found themselves attracted to his magnetic, twisted charisma but eventually started participating in his crimes as well. If you're a fan of true crime, this is your story. Meticulously researched, it offers a chilling glimpse into the mind of a true sociopath.

Nicole says

I had never heard of this serial killer, so I found the book interesting. It's a very quick read with no fluff or sensationalized drama. The story is told in a very straight-forward, factual manner. The author could have delved more into some of the details of the killer and the people who surrounded him. I was kind of intrigued by the killer's adoptive mother and would have liked to learn more about her relationship with him.

Toni says

Pied Piper – 1950's killer. This story didn't have an enormous amount of background info but just was interesting in the peculiarities of the murder and his garish obsession with his appearance/make-up.

Bloodlands collection – 6 books The Pirate, Little Slaughterhouse on the Prairie, Brick Slayer, Panic, Pied Piper, Rampage

Crime stories, whether in movies, TV or books always reflect the morality and mortality of humans – as cautionary tales to warn us...me especially. The bigger the human flaws or outsized characters; the villain(s) or defenseless victim(s), the press (broadsheet & tabloid), psychiatrists, police, and/or lawyers the more I gawk...

Note: all the ebooks were tricked out with Kindle in motion special effects. Bumped up the ante to the sensationalism...can't tell if that's a shot at the press or not...
