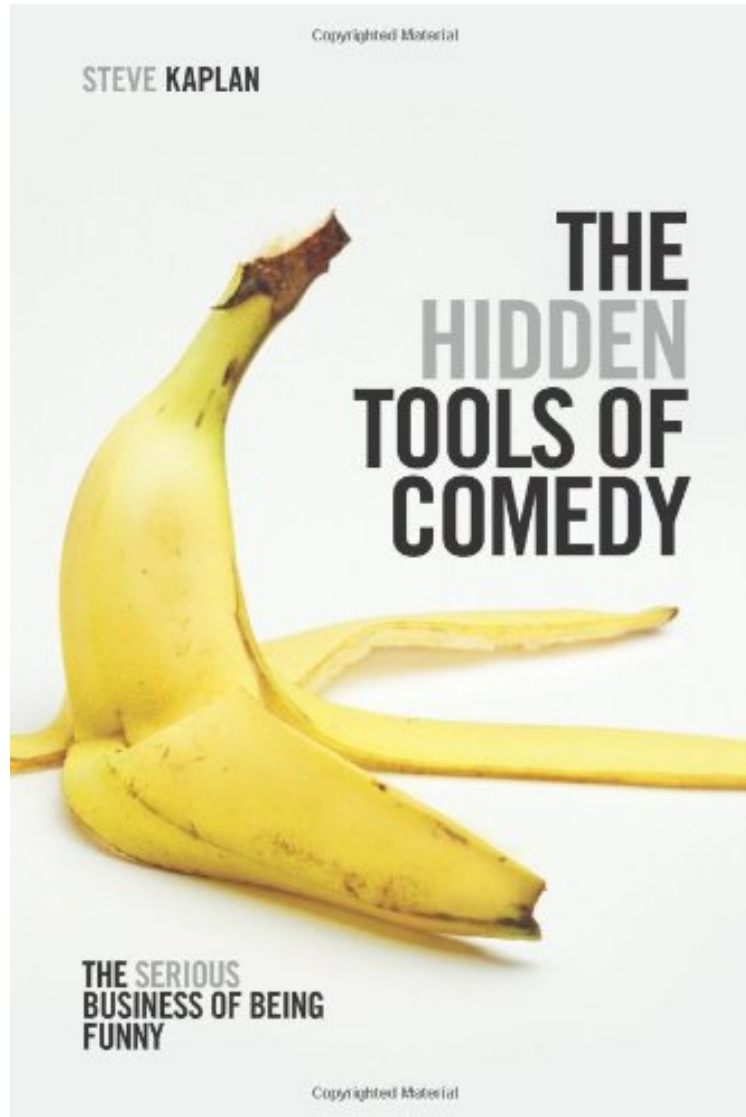


The Hidden Tools of Comedy: The Serious Business of Being Funny

Steve Kaplan

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Steve Kaplan : The Hidden Tools of Comedy: The Serious Business of Being Funny before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Hidden Tools of Comedy: The Serious Business of Being Funny:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Chock full of valuable material you can use again and again, a true writing reference book By Hands On Equine I'm actually still reading this book, but that's one of the reasons I wanted to write a review--it's so densely packed with information and ideas to ponder that I have been reading it in installments and trying to apply it as I go, both in viewing and in writing comedy. I can already tell this will be a long-term

reference for me as a writer. The book is thorough in its approach and unique in presenting comedy writing outside of most formulaic techniques. I also like that the author takes the time to answer personal correspondence from his website related to the book's material. I would like to take a workshop with him one day in the near future. Lots to absorb here, so plan on reading it slowly or re-reading after you've had a chance to think about the content over time.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. It's like a fully stocked toolbox for comedy scenes.

By R. Stone

If your comedic skill isn't broken, you don't need a tool to fix it. But nobody reading these reviews is a laugh-genius, so the tools listed here will come in handy for 99% of those who are pursuing careers in comedic writing, acting, or directing.

First, these tools have all been used to make you laugh before - hundreds of times. For the most of you, the chapters will be littered with "Aha!" moments and the sort of "the scales have fallen from my eyes" game changers that can really up your skill when it comes to creating realistic and effective scenes. Notable examples are: a paradigm shift away from Straight Man/Funny Man to He Who Sees/He Who Doesn't See, the idea of the truly funny characters being realistic people who just lack skills, and the use of overlying metaphors to help further illustrate and give added effectiveness to character relationships (like two roommates acting as a married couple, etc.).

Second, Steve Kaplan goes out of his way to emphasize that these are just tools. You shouldn't use this excellent book to build your house upon. You should use its advice when things go wrong, and while it seems like a footnote I think this is the most important part of the mix. You're given excellent advice on every page along with scenes and clips that illustrate the advice, but you're never told, "You must do this or your comedy will crash and burn." These are simply good ideas that have been proven in the past and while you might be able to get around using them in certain situations, if something doesn't get a laugh (or as good a laugh as you want), you can probably find an example in this book that will tell you why.

Third, Steve goes out of his way early on to debunk the notion that comedy is entirely dependent upon talent and that somehow comedians don't work to hone their skills like everyone else. So a solid part of the book acts as motivation to those who might think, "I'm just not funny enough and I never will be." Steve emphasizes the simple truth (that I and most comedians have found at one point or another, but maybe didn't put into words as well as Mr. Kaplan has): If you can react realistically to an absurd situation, you can get a laugh.

Overall I think this "do the work - here are some good tools" approach to comedy is the most refreshing and eye-opening one anybody can ask for. There are absolutely zero gimmick tools, no appeals to blue or shock humor, and all the recommendations are backed up with loads of thoroughly explained examples. If you want to get more laughs and better laughs, read this book.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. the need to be comfortable with not knowing that common

By W. D. Temple

I have been in process of workshoping a solo show I'm planning to take to Edinburgh Fringe and this book has been invaluable. I think we all get these ideas about what our identity is and we cling to that publicly and sometimes in what we write. This book gets you to take a look at certain fundamentals, for me in particular, the need to be comfortable with not knowing that common, messy aspect of being human, and the weird and bad but real choices we make when that happens. This book has also helped me as an actor. I'm going to read it again now.

While other books give you tips on how to write funny, this book offers a paradigm shift in understanding the mechanics and art of comedy, and the proven, practical tools that help writers translate that understanding into successful, commercial scripts. The Hidden Tools of Comedy unlocks the unique secrets and techniques of writing comedy. Kaplan deconstructs sequences in popular films and TV that work and don't work, and explains what tools were used (or should have been used).

About the Author

For more than a decade, Steve Kaplan has been the industry's most sought-after expert on comedy writing and production. In addition to having taught at UCLA, NYU, Yale, and other top universities, Kaplan created the HBO Workspace, the HBO New Writers Program, and was co-founder and Artistic Director of Manhattans Punch Line Theatre. He has served as a consultant to such companies as DreamWorks, Disney, Aardman Animation, HBO, and has worked with producers and production companies in Australia, Canada, New Zealand, London, Ireland, and Sweden.