

“the hidden tools of comedy” by steve kaplan – book review



By Forris Day Jr.

Imagine you are a stand up comedian and as you walk off stage from your set you hear an audience member yell “Someone call the cops because....YOU KILLED IT!”. Relax, do not run out the back door, no one has died, you are not in trouble. It’s quite simply an expression any stand up comic would love to hear as he or she walks off the stage after their set. It’s a good thing. It means you left the crowd laughing and wanting more.

Comedy is hard work. Yes...I said work. The payment for that work is laughter and hopefully a bit of cash. Whether you are writing a stand up comedy act, a funny novel or a comedic movie script you

need to create funny stuff that will make the reader or viewer laugh. The question is “How do I write comedy that is truly funny?” One great choice is Steve Kaplan’s book “The Hidden Tools of Comedy”.

Comedy isn’t just an art. Kaplan explains that there are real mechanics behind a good joke and a laugh-out-loud story and he breaks down those mechanics with lots of examples from television shows and movies. He includes examples from movie scripts and TV scripts so that you can really wrap your head around what he is teaching you. Once you know the mechanics that create a funny story or comedic character you have a whole new arsenal of tools at your disposal. Kaplan describes, in great detail, why something works and why other things do not.

The hefty book is divided into 3 parts. Part 1 talks about the theory of comedy. Lots of good information and set-up for the entire book is wrapped up into part 1. Do not skip this section. Part 2 delves into the practical part of comedy and teaches you the 8 individual tools of comedy and how they relate to each other. This is the meat of the book. Kaplan gives you the 8 tools then breaks each one down into its own chapter. Think of part 2 as a reference section to refer back to, time and time again, until you fully understand what is being taught. Part 3 is FAQ section and lots of reference information to further your studies into funny.

After reading this book I have learned a lot. I feel I have a new understanding of comedy that I can bring into my writing and my sad little stand up comedy act. Steve Kaplan’s book “The Hidden Tools of Comedy” is to the writer what spinach is to Popeye. It will make you a stronger writer and I recommend you either buy it, borrow from your library or steal it from a friend who owns it.

Steve Kaplan teaches courses on comedy writing and this book is based on those classes. It’s written in a very conversational tone and he repeats things that are important so that you do not brush over any vital information. A must read for anyone who writes and needs to create interesting stories and characters.

[Purchase “The Hidden Tools of Comedy”](#)

[Steve Kaplan’s Comedy Intensive classes](#)