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UNDERSTANDING SCREENWRITING

LEARNING FROM GOOD, NOT-QUITE-SO-GOOD, AND BAD SCREENPLAYS

BY TOM STEMPEL

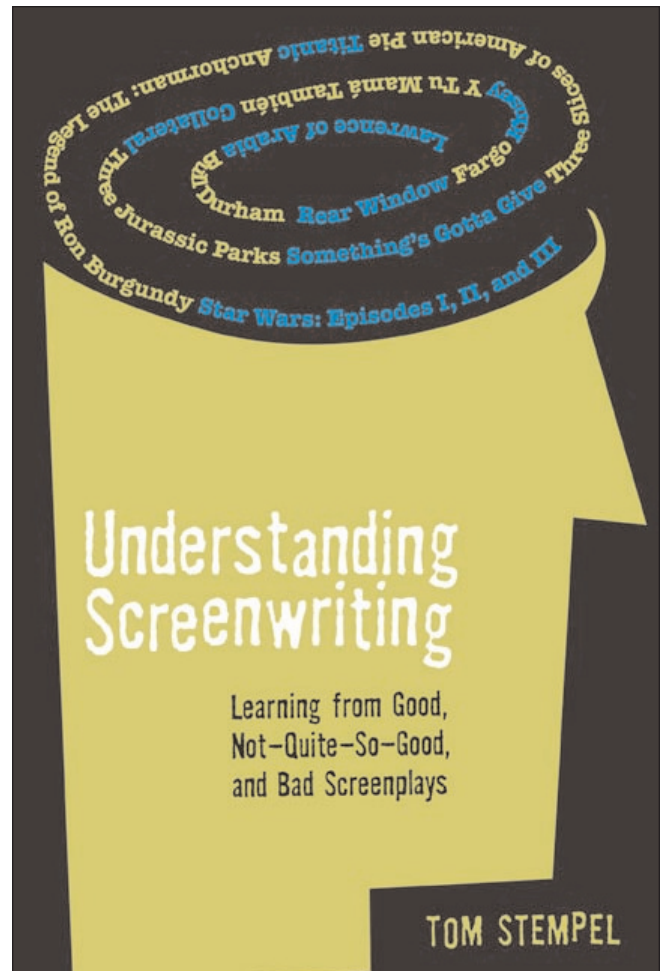
You learn the craft of screenwriting only by writing, but you can increase your knowledge of the craft by studying scripts of the past and present, good and bad.

In this informative and wittily entertaining book, film historian and screenwriting instructor Tom Stempel takes you through over fifty films and gives you his insights into why the scripts do or do not work. Just as important as his observations is his teaching you how to develop your own abilities to analyze scripts and films. Because it deals with the contributions of other collaborators on a film, this book will also be useful to producers, directors, actors as well as film critics and historians.

Stempel covers a wide range of film genres, including romantic comedies, science fiction movies, horny teenager movies, horror movies, and historical films. In addition to big budget films, several limited budget films are discussed, since beginning writers (and producers and directors), are better off trying to break into the business writing and directing their own low budget film.

As is the creation of any art form, screenwriting is a very situational process. Stempel provides insights into the process rather than absolute rules.

TOM STEMPEL is the author of five books, two of which were published by Continuum--*FrameWork: A History of Screenwriting in American Film* and *Storytellers to the Nation: A History of American Television Writing*--the others being *Screenwriter: The Life of Nunnally Johnson*; *Screenwriting*; and *American Audiences on Movies and Moviegoing*. He is Professor of Cinema, Cinema-Television Department, Los Angeles City College. He has taught on these subjects for more than thirty years.



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PRAISE FOR TOM STEMPEL'S PREVIOUS BOOKS ON SCREENWRITING

For *Screenwriter: the Life and Times of Nunnally Johnson*

"Stempel conveys the personality of the man, along with an analysis of a writer who has mastered his specialized craft. It is a stunning, superbly drawn portrait."

Publishers Weekly

"A reverential ode to the craft of screenwriting itself."

Los Angeles Times

"A paen of praise to the writer, wherever he may be, but particularly those writers who toil in the Hollywood vineyards."

Daily Variety

For *Screenwriting*

"The perfect tool for the reader who wants to teach him or herself. It shows readers how to use their own creative talents and interests to plan and create a successful script."

The Inkling Newsletter

For *FrameWork: A History of Screenwriting in the American Film*

"The definite work on the history of screenwriting...a book to be preserved, cherished, and used."

From the Foreword by Philip Dunne, Screenwriter, *How Green Was My Valley*

"The first comprehensive treatment of the art and craft of screenwriting Hollywood style...a fine overview."

Communications Booknotes

"A comprehensive study of the complex function and history of the American screenwriter...an invaluable resource for anyone interested in film, popular culture, or twentieth century American writing."

Georgia Review

"Highly recommended"

Anthony Slide, *Classic Images*

"This perceptive account is filled with stories spotlighting writers' creative work, and their struggle to achieve recognition."

American Cinematographer

"Screenwriting, long a stepchild to the glamour of directing, is given its just due."

Show Business

For *Storytellers to the Nation: A History of American Television Writing:*

"Takes the refreshing approach of concentrating on process instead of personalities...Mr. Stempel's lively, well-informed and well-organized book incorporates numeras anecdotes about the development of specific shows and larger currents affecting the industry as a whole."

The New York Times

"A rich information source and a compelling read."

New York Newsday

"An engaging and comprehensive history of writing for American television."

Emmy

"Reveals the evolution of writing creatively that tends to draw on current reality while helping reshape American lifestyle."

Back Stage/Shoot

