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39 Steps to Better Screenwriting: A Practical Guide to Improving Your Screenplay

Paul Chitlik

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Paul Chitlik : 39 Steps to Better Screenwriting: A Practical Guide to Improving Your Screenplay before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 39 Steps to Better Screenwriting: A Practical Guide to Improving Your Screenplay:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. It's fantastic, for all levels, buy it. By D. SigerFull disclosure: Paul Chitlik was one of my professors at UCLA when I was in the professional program for screenwriting. In fact, he was my first workshop professor and I can still remember the writing exercises he put us through to suss out if any of us had a real story to tell. I think the answer was no, but we all plugged away regardless, and we did so under the sagely and patient guidance of Paul, who never doubted all of us could turn our whimsy into something compelling. But this review isn't about my nostalgia, it's about Paul's latest book: 39 Steps to Better Screenwriting. How about 39 Characters for a Review: "It's fantastic, for all levels, buy it." (that was harder than it looks!) There are a lot of helpful

screenwriting books out there, but there are two things about this one that make it truly stand out. First, it's written by Paul and you get his experience, wisdom, and honesty in every sentence. When I read each Step, I can vividly picture him in those UCLA classrooms, at the end of the workshop table, saying these things. His critiques and his examples all exuded a deep understanding of storytelling, and particularly storytelling for the screen, where you have no time for meanderings and missteps in your pages. He is firm and direct when you know you could have done better, you know you didn't put conflict in that last scene, you know your protagonist is adrift without a goal. Paul always has a kind way to put it, but you're never in doubt where you stand with your story. So it is with this book, where he seems prescient about your issues and questions, because he's been there a thousand times before. Second, most screenwriting books, or any books that help your writing, usually involve reading about the whole process of why the book was written, what tasks you need to do to improve, and what goals to set for yourself (in pages). You finish the book feeling inspired, set about doing some of the exercises, then find yourself back to staring at the blank page on your screen. This book isn't like that. This book is 39 short hits that you can read in any order and find a spark of motivation in all of them. Each "Step" takes anywhere from seconds to minutes to consume, yet reads like Paul is sitting across from you having coffee and giving you a little nudge in the right direction, a little observation of the real workings of the industry, or a little kick in the butt to stop making excuses. You can burn straight through the book in a single evening, or take your time exploring each topic, or both. I enjoyed reading it straight through, and now flip to a random section for a little pick-me-up whenever I feel my words struggling and my excuses flowing. If you're a writer, get yourself a copy of this book. It really is a no-lose deal. There are no high-falutin' promises of getting rich in here, just straight, pragmatic advice about getting yourself in gear and producing pages. And that's what you want - that's what you need - to finish that story you've got cooped up inside your head. Dan Siger, author of the webcomic *Midnight's Masque* - midnightsmasque.com 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Great Take on Screenwriting Principles By Robert GerstEngaging and quick, 39 Steps to Better Screenwriting: A Practical Guide to Improving Your Screenplay expresses the convictions of a pro who know whereof he speaks. Chitlik writes about what makes a screenplay work. In conversational chapters (each 1,000 words or less), Chitlik offers essential, often very funny takes on screenwriting principles. Chitlik covers the big topics: Goal and plan. Inciting incident. The midpoint where your story goes off in a new direction. Writing. Rewriting. Punctuating. Hanging in there. Bad movies that are bad because nobody changes and great ones where everything does. Bad guys with a touch of good and good guys with the opposite. Best of all, he recounts how it feels for a screenwriter to behold at, a comic book convention, 120,000 people gathered to celebrate the imagination of creators. Chitlik has written and directed produced movies and now teaches screenwriting at Loyola Marymount University. This is a great book. I loved 39 Steps to Better Screenwriting: A Practical Guide to Improving Your Screenplay. 1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Terrific companion book to his previous "Rewrite" By Mark C. Miller Paul Chitlik is one of the top screenwriting teachers at UCLA and has years of experience teaching MFA-level courses in screenwriting. Check out the impressive 5-star reviews for his previous book here on : "Rewrite: A Step-By-Step Guide to Strengthen Structure, Characters, and Drama in Your Screenplay." This one is a terrific companion to that book and goes even deeper in its highly informative and perceptive essays dealing with a range of important screenwriting topics. If you're not lucky enough to study directly from the man, these books are your next-best choice. Better yet, do both!

This is not a beginner's book on screenplay writing, though a beginner could read it and learn. This is a writer's consigliere. It's a book of advice and reflection that will kick ass against just about any screenwriting problem. It's a series of essays on film and television writing, a deep background on very specific craft issues ranging from punctuation to meaning in your screenplay. Chapters range from "The Antagonist as a Good Guy" to how to establish an emotional core in your script, to one on Katy Perry's use of story in her concerts (Yes, that Katy Perry) to "The Power of Story." There's even one called "What Film School Should I Go to?" You'll want to carry it with you to the Starbucks and consult it like you would your best friend when you run into trouble. It will get you to think about your writing in new ways and to give you tools to express those thoughts. It's a writer's secret weapon, and now you can have it, too.