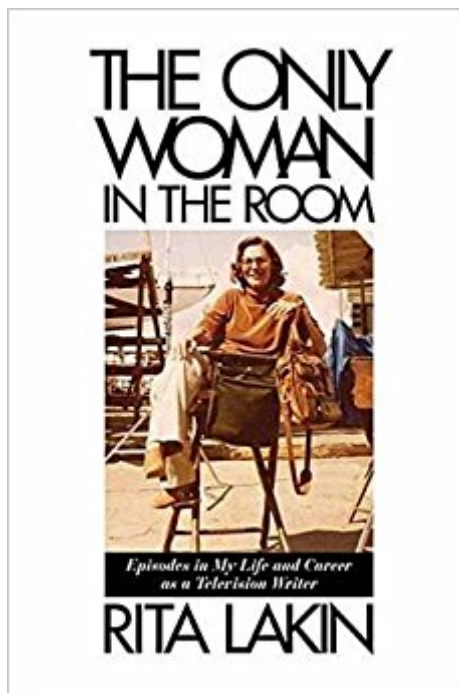




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# The Only Woman In The Room: Episodes In My Life And Career As A Television Writer



## Synopsis

(Applause Books). Rita Lakin was a pioneer a female scriptwriter in the early 1960s when Hollywood television was exclusively male. For years, in creative meetings she was literally "the only woman in the room." In this breezy but heartfelt remembrance, Lakin takes readers to a long-forgotten time when women were not considered worthy or welcome at the creative table. Widowed with three young children, she talked herself into a secretarial job at Universal Studios in 1962, despite being unable to type or take dictation. With guts, skill, and humor, she rose from secretary to freelancer, to staff writer, to producer, to executive producer and showrunner, meeting hundreds of famous and infamous show biz legends along the way during her long and unexpected career. She introduced many women into the business and was a feminist before she even knew she was one. The general public did not know her name, but Lakin touched the lives of millions of viewers week after week, year after year. The relevance of her personal journey charming yet occasionally shocking will be an eye-opener to present-day who take for granted the abundance of female creative talent in today's Hollywood.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

At turns hilarious, tender, and tough, this is the fabulous memoir of a woman who forged her own path to the writers room in an industry dominated by men. She's wise to what was going on around her, yet unafraid to admit how insecure she was in her work.... Lakin can only be admired -- by both women and men -- for forging a marvelous path through fears and heartbreak. Was it a charmed

career? No. One clearly earned. --Foreword Reviews  
Lakin has written a frank memoir with anecdotes, some funny and some appalling, that illustrate the bizarre inter-workings of show business and the difficulties women have faced in Hollywood. If you like an underdog story, or if you like reading about Hollywood, you'll enjoy *The Only Woman in the Room*. --Monica's Bookish Life

RITA LAKIN (Marin County, CA) is an Emmy-nominated screenwriter, television producer, and published author of seven mystery novels (the *Getting Old Is Murder* series), two produced plays (*No Language But a Cry* and *Saturday Night at Grossingers*), and several short stories. She was among the first women to create, write, and produce for television, helping to establish the role of TV "showrunner" in the 1970s. Lakin is the recipient of both the Edgar Allan Poe Award and the prestigious Avery Hopwood Award.

Thank you Rita Lakin. I have just spent several delightful evenings in the company of her amazing life story, *The Only Woman in the Room*. Rita is a writer of fiction and so it is fitting that her memoir reads like a novel. The protagonist is a 60s Los Angeles housewife with three kids whose charming thirty-something husband all of a sudden drops dead from leukemia. How will her children be housed and fed? How is she to survive when she has never held a job? She types ten words a minute. Should she go back home to the Bronx and live with Mommy and Daddy? Either through strategy or luck I frankly don't know which, but it doesn't matter the young widow lands an entry-level job at Universal Studios in the nutty world of show business. Had she been a more accomplished typist, she would have suffered through boredom and low pay for the next three decades. But not in Hollywood. Before you can say Cary Grant, her mentor is Aaron Spelling, she is writing scripts for hit TV shows like *Dr. Kildare* and *Mod Squad*, and her take home (in 1971) is \$200,000. Lest you think it all came easily, Rita's story is loaded with reversals and heartache. The theme of *The Only Woman in the Room* is that women of Rita's generation were raised to function as wives and mothers not as career women. She frequently sabotages her own success thanks to her gender-based insecurities. And when she is not messing things up, the male-oriented business does it for her. Yet she survives all of it with a groundbreaking career in our most glamorous field. I was fascinated to read the first-person accounts of personalities, TV shows, and movies that Rita was intimately involved with, and as the saying goes, I couldn't put it down.

How many people got to casually pass Hollywood's iconic Cary Grant as the two strolled into their nearby respective studio offices? Rita Lakin did. With nearly 300 produced screenplays, the majority of Americans have been surprised, moved and thoroughly entertained by Lakin's insightful and passionate storytelling--but few know her name. Lakin's memoir, "The Only Woman in the Room," is full of tales about the ups and downs of the screen trade and the Hollywood life. She rubbed elbows with famous people, like actor Omar Sharif. She worked with Edward Asner, Richard Chamberlain, and Mia Farrow, and wrote the script for Sydney Pollack's first TV directing job. And she was mentored by legendary producer Aaron Spelling. She raised three children while writing scripts for many famous TV movies and series, like *The Mod Squad*, *Peyton Place* and *Dynasty*. She created the TV series *The Rookies*, and was the supervising producer (or showrunner) on a few more. She was even an executive producer. Through it all, she had to find her way as the only woman in a virtually exclusively male creative environment. I particularly enjoyed her story about a high-powered studio executive who literally circled her chair while he cursed a blue streak--to see if she could handle working around men (he later explained). She once had to work in a 2-person office with a deranged writer who had murdered his wife, and she had a major writing award stolen from her by an unscrupulous boss. The quality of her screenwriting and storytelling alone dragged a failing soap opera to the top of the Nielson Ratings. And the story about the Mafia guy is priceless. Young widow, single mother, Hollywood pioneer--Lakin's life story tracks and reflects the cultural changes that swept America in the latter part of the 20th century. Her guided trip through TV Land spans the development of our modern TV landscape. Her breezy writing keeps things entertaining as she shows what Hollywood is really like behind that glitzy curtain.

A five star review, where Rita shares her experience as *The Only Woman in the Room*. Surrounded by all male television producers and directors, she shares inside information on life the 60's and 70's where women were treated as objects. As the screenwriter for hit shows such as *Dr. Kildare*, *Peyton Place*, and *The Mod Squad*, Rita paved the way for future women entering the TV and film industry. Her book tells it all, from dating as a single parent to personalities who either were back stabbers or mentors. Wonderful writing, I savored each episode.

A great look at a pioneer in the industry. She reminds me of Ann Marcus who also fought to be in the room. They both wrote for *Peyton Place* and then went on to head write a soap opera. Lakin is very witty, even when her life was falling apart. It is eye opening to read about her interactions with

famous actors, producers and writers. Those who want to be in the room should definitely read her book. My only complaint is that she could have talked a bit more about her time on The Doctors.

If you are a fan of television, you need to read this book. Dr. Kildare to Movies of the Week. She was involved.

Great history, great fun, and great memories, especially as a woman in Hollywood at the same time. I read it in a day. Buy it. You won't be sorry.

I have a new insight as to what goes on behind the scenes, great book

Well written and honest insight into the business. I liked the format, concise and fast moving.

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