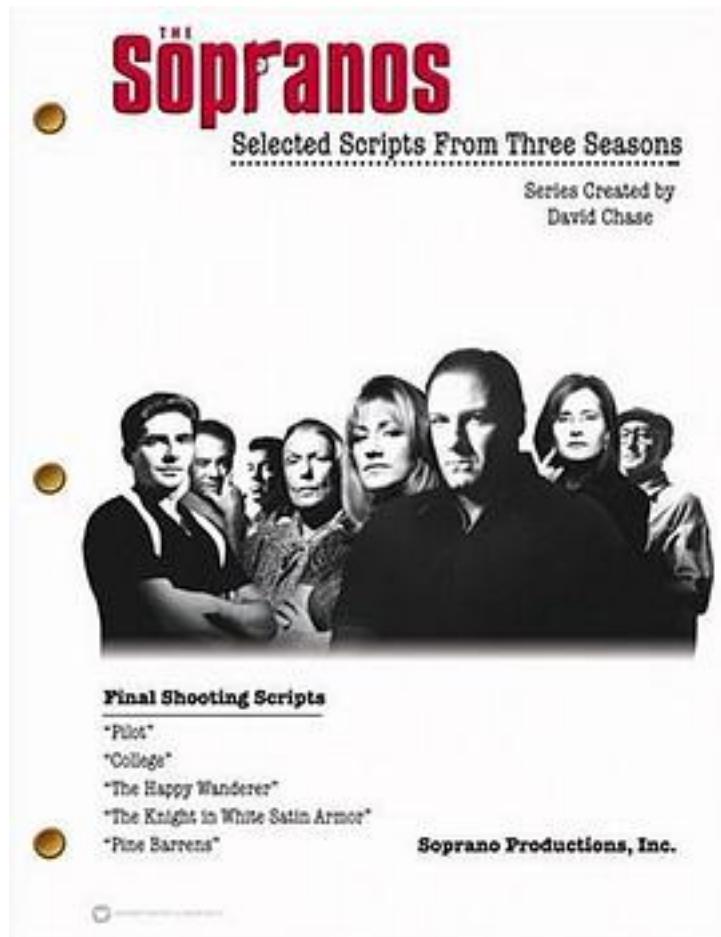


The Sopranos



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'In its original run on HBO, "The Sopranos" mattered, and it matters still', Dana Polan asserts early in this analysis of the hit show, in which he sets out to clarify the impact and importance of the series in both its cultural and media-industry contexts. A

renowned film and TV scholar, Polan combines a close and extended reading of the show itself - and of select episodes and scenes - with broader attention to the social landscape with which it is in dialogue. For Polan, "The Sopranos" is a work of playful irony that complicates simplistic attempts to grasp its meanings and values. The show seductively beckons the viewer into an amoral universe and seems to hint at ways to make sense of its ethically complicated situations, only to challenge the viewer's complacent grasp of things. It deftly exploits the interplay between art culture and popular culture by combining elements of art cinema - meandering plots, narrative breaks, and an uncertain progression - with the allure of a soap opera as it delves into its characters' sex lives, mob rivalries, and parent-child conflicts. A show about corrupt figures who parasitically try to squeeze illicit profit from the system, "The Sopranos" itself seems a target of attempts to glom onto its fame as a successful TV series, from media executives, to marketers, to critics and writers, to presidential candidates. 'Everyone wants a piece of Sopranos action', says Polan, and he traces the marketing of the series across both official and unauthorized media platforms, including cookbooks, games, DVDs, and the kitschy Sopranos bus tour. Critiquing previous books on "The Sopranos", Polan suggests that in their quest to see deep meaning, many of the authors missed the show's ironic and comedic side.

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