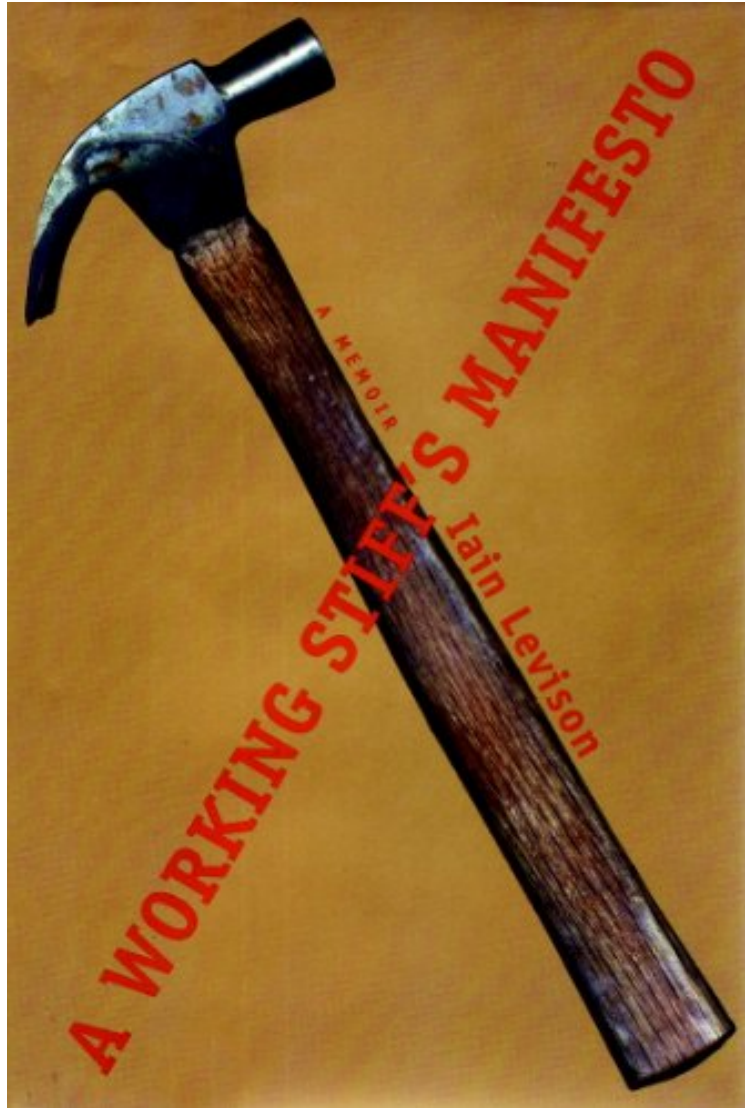


(Mobile book) Working Stiff's Manifesto: A Memoir

Working Stiff's Manifesto: A Memoir

Iain Levison

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Iain Levison : Working Stiff's Manifesto: A Memoir before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Working Stiff's Manifesto: A Memoir:

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. An absolute must-read for the working stiff. By Kcorn. If you've suffered the travails of working one dead end job after another, whether you've got a college degree or not, then you'll recognize (all too well) the feelings described by Levison. There were parts that had me laughing out loud (the head of a sculpture suddenly exploding due to a mistake on Levison's part) and other sections that had me feeling sympathy for the guy. Vividly written, conjuring up the day to day struggles of trying to stay afloat, Levison had me totally riveted from page one. I wish the author would come up with even more works of nonfiction...and I wonder what has

happened to him since this book was written. 5 of 5 people found the following review helpful. He hits the nail on the head. By A Customer I too wondered (as another reviewer did) why Mr. Levison, during the years he was doing these make-do jobs, didn't continue to pursue work using the writing skills he obviously has. Maybe he did, and just worked "in the meantime". I also don't recall details of his financial obligations--family, housing, education loans, etc.--which is to say, his bottom-line needs. Granted--working full time does not leave a whole lot of hours free for job hunting, and the economy and employment situations in the US has been a roller coaster ride for many years. But there is truth within his observations, and he writes it like it is. He offers a perspective on what is the working reality for many decent, hard-working people. Work at this level has become a game (on both sides). I think it helps to consciously be aware of that. He presents these sad realities with great humor and irony! An easy, quick, entertaining and informative little book. 9 of 10 people found the following review helpful. A Case Study From the Human Condition. By LDPI I heard or read that Kalfa's buddies would howl with delight as he read them passages from "The Trial" when it was a work in-progress; likewise, prisoners at San Quenton never enjoyed themselves more than watching a performance of "Waiting for Godot." I can only recommend this wonderful little memoir as my contribution to this list. My twenties were somewhat similar to Levinson's misadventures although not in scope and insight, still I identified immediately with his odyssey. The book is well written to boot and I plan to read it every decade or so to see what more I can derive. By the way, ignore the poor guy who lambasted this book a few reviews back with comments such as "How to blame everyone but yourself for your problems." There is not an ounce of this anywhere; all Levison wants is fair play after he gets a job and his futile quest to find it is where this story gets its motivation. If you need one line to summarize, then try this on for size: It's a story about the misuse of power done with great satire. Great read!

Iain Levison can find work but not fulfillment. The frustration of dead-end, deadhead labor induces a kind of pink-slip payback syndrome as the realization sets in that his college degree will gain him little by way of psychic wages on the job. He is adrift in a workaday world where one human is as good as the next and all are expendable. Meaningless promises abound, "like when they were telling us [at commencement that] we were the future of the world, the bright shining blah blah blah." In ten years, Iain Levison has lived in six states and worked at forty-two jobs, from fish cutter in Alaska to furniture mover in North Carolina, film-set gopher, oil deliveryman, truck driver, crab fisherman . . . He quit thirty of them, got fired from nine, and has difficulty remembering the other three. Whatever could go wrong often did, hilariously. *A Working Stiff's Manifesto* makes *Nickel and Dimed* look like chump change. It is a funny book about the not-so-funny American workplace. The real thing, written not by a high-priced journalist disguised as a counter clerk, or a tenured professor passing as a vagrant, but by a genuine wage-dependent, red-blooded working stiff too "rich" for welfare and too broke to fit a consumer demographic. He works to keep his car running to get back and forth from work. He works to get by and get back to square one for the next day's labors.

From Publishers Weekly Levison is a "modern-day Tom Joad" who, over the last decade, has worked 42 jobs in six different states, including mover, fish cutter, cook, caterer and cable TV thief. He recalls those jobs in this entertaining, unusual mix of autobiography and social commentary reminiscent of Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America*. Levison imagines himself a new breed of itinerant laborer a college graduate with a \$40,000 English degree. His America is a desperate and brutal country, a place where you're hired with a promise of insurance after 90 days, then fired on the 89th; where criminals beat each other to a pulp in Alaska fisheries, and truckers make fraudulent entries in their logbooks in order to keep up with impossible schedules. But Levison's droll sense of humor eases him (and his readers) through the tough times; he recalls catering a party and bleeding into the guests' Merlot, expounds on the definition of "r sum" ("the French term for 'page full of bullshit' ") and proposes a new motto for Dutch Harbor, Alaska ("What fatal flaw in your character made you wind up here?"). As both a writer and an employee, Levison can come off as a trifle obnoxious some of his workplace misfortune he definitely brings on himself and he's mercilessly scornful of the corporate yes-men and unscrupulous characters he works with. Yet his moral vision more than makes up for it; he's a sharp-eyed, impassioned critic of the American workplace. (Apr.) Forecast: Although any book that targets itself toward people without a steady paycheck would seem to be doomed, Levison's just might do well, given today's high unemployment rates and the book's undeniable originality. Copyright 2002 Reed Business Information, Inc. From Library Journal A college graduate with a degree in English, Levison has held 42 jobs in the past ten years. He quit 30 of those jobs, was fired from nine, and can't remember the other three. He is currently unemployed. This 164-page screed details his employment history, but it is obvious that Levison's problem is as much his attitude as the poor market for college graduates. He declares an English degree is only good for secretarial work (ignoring such jobs as public relations and journalism), and he applies for jobs for which he clearly is not qualified and seems surprised when they don't work out. Most of the positions he has held are low-wage, dead-end jobs (e.g., Alaskan fish cutter, furniture mover, heating oil deliveryman, etc.), but he makes little effort to improve his lot. Moving up, Levison observes, is "asking for trouble." His employment history is an entertaining read, but there is no reflection or analysis that would be useful to others. Not recommended. Christopher Brennan, SUNY Coll. at Brockport Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From Booklist Ten years after

getting army experience and an English degree, Levinson had 42 jobs behind him and an insightful tale to tell about the working world. Promised training in electronics by a military recruiter ("my first experience with an experienced corporate bullshit artist"), he learned to handle a rifle and interrogate Russian and East German prisoners, and his degree in English is described as "a \$40,000 fly swatter." Through classified ads and word of mouth, he got jobs--as a fish cutter, restaurant worker, oil deliveryman, and computer wire installer, among others--and learned some tips and truths about work. And the truth, to Levinson, is that the corporate world treats inequitably and has basic disregard for what it considers disposable workers, who number in the millions (and include the college-educated) and just scrape by. Barbara Ehrenreich's *Nickel and Dimed* [BKL Ap 1 01] was a startling reportorial view of low-wage work, but it was based on an assignment, while Levinson describes his life; his account belongs beside hers, and it's funnier, too.

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