

# A Sound Foundation

Dear Writer,

The primary purpose of this Annual Report is to inform you of the financial status of the Writers Guild of America, west. However, it also provides an opportunity to present an overview of your Guild's myriad efforts during the course of the last year.

We are entering what promises to be a challenging period for our Guild. As we look to contract negotiations in 2001, it is clear we must continue to be vigilant in the area of our finances. The thorough planning and ongoing refinement of our budget process in years past have resulted in a solid financial foundation that will serve us well as we move into the coming critical months.

The Guild will be sending out a monthly wrap-around supplement with the *Member News* that will provide information about the issues in the negotiations and related topics. Here, however, we turn to the business of running your union.

For the fiscal year just closed on March 31, 2000 (FY 1999-2000), Guild operations ran a net surplus of \$438,053.

This surplus compares favorably with deficit of \$273,000 that we incurred at the end of the prior fiscal year and returns us to the more typical pattern of modest surpluses that we've enjoyed over the last five years.

Last year, as I wrote my annual letter to members, it was my duty to report a number of one-time expenses and unexpected revenue issues that adversely affected the Guild's bottom line.

In contrast, for the year just closed, we enjoyed a number of events that positively affected the Guild's net bottom line. On the revenue side we negotiated a settlement with our former bank tenant which obliged them to pay out almost 90% of the value of their lease to us up to three years in advance. The settlement of the lease resulted in an additional \$300,000 in revenue during FY 99-00. We also received an additional \$200,000 from the AMPTP in matching funds to complement our ongoing efforts to enhance the image of the writer. This fund was negotiated between the Guild and the AMPTP a number of years ago. These two positive events offset a short term unrealized market loss on our long-term investments due to the Fed increasing interest rates. On the expense side, we finished the year largely consistent with our budgeted projections.

Over the last decade, and under the leadership of four different Secretary-Treasurers, we have maintained a consistent focus on ensuring the Guild has both the expertise and economic resources to effectively confront management in order to further advance the rights and interests of our members.

As I mentioned, the key event for the Guild and its members next year is the expiration of the Minimum Basic Agreement (MBA) on May 1, 2001. While technically the expiration of the MBA occurs after the close of the current fiscal year, our planning and projections are

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designed to take these crucial events into consideration.

I am confident we're well equipped to meet any challenges that may lie ahead of us next year. This confidence is based on the following:

- A combined Strike Fund and Good and Welfare Fund balance of almost \$10 million.
- Unrestricted cash reserves of \$5 million.
- A line-of-credit which is now in place for up to \$4 million.
- Untapped equity in the Guild building of almost \$5 million—a recent appraisal of the Guild's building indicates it has roughly doubled in value since we purchased it five and one-half years ago.

Last year I began the practice of disclosing reimbursable expenses incurred by your Officers and Board. Last fiscal year, the Guild reimbursed the Officers \$1,029 and the Board of Directors \$2,617 for official Guild business during the fiscal year. President John Wells and Vice-President Daniel Petrie, Jr. incurred no reimbursable expenses. Total reimbursable expenses for Secretary-Treasurer Michael Mahern totaled \$1,029.

I would like to thank the members of the Membership-Finance Committee for their deep commitment to the complicated and time-consuming task of managing the Guild's finances. Co-chair Cynthia Thompson, Adam Rodman, David Balkan, Patric Verrone, Pat Green and Elias Davis deserve our thanks for their dedicated service on this committee. Thanks also go to the staff who run our Membership and Finance operations: Corrine Tippin (Membership), Alice Lee (Dues), Don Gor (Finance) as well as Paul Nawrocki (Assistant Executive Director).

I trust you will find the information within these pages useful. We pride ourselves on keeping you informed about Guild business, and we believe this Report to Writers helps to fulfill that commitment.

Sincerely,



Michael A. Mahern

Secretary-Treasurer

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# Table of Contents

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>THE MARKETPLACE FOR FILM, TELEVISION AND<br/>OTHER AUDIO-VISUAL WRITERS . . . . .</b> | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>RESIDUALS AND FOREIGN LEVIES. . . . .</b>   | <b>7</b>  |
| <b>CREDITS, CREATIVE RIGHTS AND THE WGA AWARDS . . . . .</b>                             | <b>8</b>  |
| <b>CONTRACT NEGOTIATIONS &amp; ENFORCEMENT. . . . .</b>                                  | <b>10</b> |
| <b>PROTECTING AND EXTENDING WGA JURISDICTION. . . . .</b>                                | <b>11</b> |
| <b>ENGAGING THE PUBLIC AGENDA. . . . .</b>   | <b>12</b> |
| <b>2000 ANNUAL FINANCIAL STATEMENTS . . . . .</b>  | <b>15</b> |

## The Marketplace for Film, Television and Other Audio-Visual Writers

Writing in 1999 was a steady-state enterprise. The numbers of writers employed and their earnings both reflect a slight decline in traditional areas of employment, offset by growth through the expansion of Guild jurisdiction into animation.

The total number of WGAw members reporting earnings in 1999 withdrew 2.7% from the all-time high in 1998.

As the chart on this page (right) shows, the percentage of writers employed in 1999 fell to a four-year low of 51.3%.

Employment of 4,419 writers was still higher than the 1997 figure, which had also been at a record level.

The decline in employment levels resulted from declines in the number of members reporting earnings in both the television and screen sectors.

Screen writing employed 1,788 writers in 1999, down 4.4% from the level in 1998.

Television employment declined 1.4% to 3,092. Employment in made-for-pay-TV programming, tallied separately, declined 11.9% to 178 writers, reflecting the volatility of the much smaller sector.

Animation was the major area of growth in employment under Guild contracts, as organizing efforts in this area bore fruit.

Total earnings under WGAw contracts totaled \$720.4 million, an increase of 0.1% over 1998.

Earnings figures in the major work areas followed the pattern of decline, with only the growth in covered animation work from the organizing efforts contributing to the overall increase in total earnings.

### NUMBER OF WGAw MEMBERS EMPLOYED

| YEAR | TOTAL EMPLOYED | PERCENT CHANGE | MEMBERS REPORTING | PERCENT CHANGE | PERCENT EMPLOYED |
|------|----------------|----------------|-------------------|----------------|------------------|
| 1994 | 3,886          | --             | 7,774             | --             | 50.0%            |
| 1995 | 3,962          | +2.0%          | 7,861             | +1.1%          | 50.4%            |
| 1996 | 4,189          | +5.7%          | 8,094             | +3.0%          | 51.8%            |
| 1997 | 4,367          | +4.2%          | 8,353             | +3.2%          | 52.3%            |
| 1998 | 4,540          | +4.0%          | 8,460             | +1.3%          | 53.7%            |
| 1999 | 4,419          | -2.7%          | 8,618             | +1.9%          | 51.3%            |

Source: WGAw records. Note that prior year figures are updated to include late-reported information.

### NUMBER OF WRITERS EMPLOYED BY AREA OF WORK

| YEAR | TV              |                | SCREEN          |                | PAY-TV          |                | ANIMATION       |                | OTHER           |                |
|------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|      | NUMBER EMPLOYED | PERCENT CHANGE | NUMBER EMPLOYED | PERCENT CHANGE | NUMBER EMPLOYED | PERCENT CHANGE | NUMBER EMPLOYED | PERCENT CHANGE | NUMBER EMPLOYED | PERCENT CHANGE |
| 1994 | 2,647           | --             | 1,625           | --             | 166             | --             | --              | --             | 37              | --             |
| 1995 | 2,665           | +0.7%          | 1,696           | +4.4%          | 170             | +2.4%          | --              | --             | 79              | +113.5%        |
| 1996 | 2,820           | +5.8%          | 1,790           | +5.5%          | 191             | +12.4%         | --              | --             | 93              | +17.7%         |
| 1997 | 3,013           | +6.8%          | 1,809           | +1.1%          | 191             | N,C,           | --              | --             | 45              | -51.7%         |
| 1998 | 3,137           | +4.1%          | 1,871           | +3.4%          | 202             | +5.8%          | 39              | --             | 30              | -33.3%         |
| 1999 | 3,092           | -1.4%          | 1,788           | -4.4%          | 178             | -11.9%         | 85              | +118.0%        | 43              | +43.3%         |

Source: WGAw records. Note: Prior year figures are updated to include late-reported information and that work area figures do not add up to total employment figures due to writers working in more than one work area.

Despite expansive growth in virtually all entertainment industry revenue sectors, writers in Hollywood earned less in 1999 than in 1998, largely due to a contracting number of assignments and flat wage growth.

Television earnings in 1999 declined from 1998 by 1.2% to \$343.1 million. Again, this figure was still significantly higher than the 1997 levels, indicating only a modest interruption in the growth of compensation.

Screen earnings in 1999 declined from the 1998 levels by the narrow margin of 0.8%, to \$358.8 million. Pay-TV earnings declined by 7.8%, reflecting the same volatility as the employment levels. Animation grew by over 300%, reflecting the increase in covered series.

Despite the contraction in employment and total earnings, the median earnings of

### TOTAL EARNINGS UNDER WGAw CONTRACTS

*(Millions of \$)*

| YEAR | TOTAL EARNINGS | PERCENT CHANGE |
|------|----------------|----------------|
| 1994 | 501.5          | --             |
| 1995 | 592.1          | +18.1%         |
| 1996 | 678.1          | +14.5%         |
| 1997 | 685.4          | +1.1%          |
| 1998 | 719.8          | +5.0%          |
| 1999 | 720.4          | +0.1%          |

Source: WGAw records. Note: Prior year figures are updated to include late-reported information.

a working WGAw writer grew by a modest 1.8% to \$84,011. This is still off the record levels of the mid-'90s, continuing to reflect the downward tug caused by the growth of lower-paid TV writing in the few years since that peak.

### TOTAL EARNINGS UNDER WGAw CONTRACTS BY WORK AREA

*(Millions of \$)*

| YEAR | TV             |                | SCREEN         |                | PAY-TV         |                | ANIMATION      |                | OTHER          |                |
|------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
|      | MILLIONS OF \$ | PERCENT CHANGE | MILLIONS OF \$ | PERCENT CHANGE | MILLIONS OF \$ | PERCENT CHANGE | MILLIONS OF \$ | PERCENT CHANGE | MILLIONS OF \$ | PERCENT CHANGE |
| 1994 | 242.6          | --             | 251.2          | --             | 7.0            | --             | --             | --             | 0.7            | --             |
| 1995 | 269.0          | +10.9%         | 315.5          | +25.6%         | 6.3            | -10.0%         | --             | --             | 1.3            | +85.7%         |
| 1996 | 303.3          | +12.8%         | 364.4          | +15.5%         | .84            | +33.3%         | --             | --             | 2.0            | +53.9%         |
| 1997 | 326.5          | +7.7%          | 351.1          | -3.7%          | 6.9            | -17.9%         | --             | --             | 0.9            | -55.0%         |
| 1998 | 347.3          | +6.4%          | 361.5          | +3.0%          | 7.7            | +11.6%         | 2.3            | --             | 1.0            | +11.1%         |
| 1999 | 343.1          | -1.2%          | 358.8          | -0.8%          | 7.1            | -7.8%          | 10.2           | +343.5%        | 1.2            | +20.0%         |

Source: WGAw records. Note: Prior year figures are updated to include late-reported information.

### EARNINGS TRENDS AT DIFFERENT EARNINGS LEVELS (ALL WORK AREAS)

|      | <i>Lowest paid 25% of working members earned less than</i> |                | <i>Half the working members earned less or more than</i> |                | <i>Highest Paid 25% of working members earned more than</i> |                | <i>Highest Paid 5% of working writers earned more than</i> |                |
|------|--|----------------|--|----------------|---|----------------|--|----------------|
|      | 25TH PERCENTILE  | PERCENT CHANGE | MEDIAN   | PERCENT CHANGE | 75TH PERCENTILE   | PERCENT CHANGE | 95TH PERCENTILE  | PERCENT CHANGE |
| 1994 | 20,050   | --             | 63,294   | --             | 158,750   | --             | 431,250  | --             |
| 1995 | 25,000   | +24.7%         | 77,600   | +22.6%         | 182,840   | +15.2%         | 505,000  | +17.1%         |
| 1996 | 29,183   | +16.7%         | 89,649   | +15.5%         | 194,750   | +6.5%          | 527,500  | +4.5%          |
| 1997 | 26,000   | +10.9%         | 83,119   | -7.3%          | 195,074   | +0.2%          | 505,000  | -4.3%          |
| 1998 | 28,125   | +8.2%          | 82,500   | +0.7%          | 197,540   | +1.3%          | 527,500  | +4.5%          |
| 1999 | 29,337   | +4.3%          | 84,011   | +1.8%          | 199,947   | +1.2%          | 525,000  | -0.5%          |

Source: WGAw records. Note: Prior year figures are updated to include late-reported information.

Earnings growth has fluctuated at all earnings levels in recent years. 1999 was a slow-growth year for low, middle and high-end earners. At the highest level, the top 5% earners (220 writers) found their income slightly lower, at \$525,000, down 0.5% from the past year. The lowest-paid writers have the greatest growth with an earnings total of \$29,337, up 4.3% from 1998 (the lowest-paid 25%, or 1,100 writers).

### NUMBER OF GUILD MEMBERS BY MEMBERSHIP CATEGORY

|      | <i>“Active” Status</i> |         |              |
|------|------------------------|---------|--------------|
|      | ASSOCIATE              | CURRENT | POST-CURRENT |
| 1994 | 107                    | 7,432   | 146          |
| 1995 | 265                    | 7,436   | 165          |
| 1996 | 314                    | 7,637   | 186          |
| 1997 | 347                    | 7,825   | 194          |
| 1998 | 350                    | 7,883   | 213          |
| 1999 | 396                    | 8,141   | 247          |
| 2000 | 391                    | 8,409   | 706          |

Source: WGAw records, April each year. The Guild Constitution now allows members to remain Post-Current status by paying an annual service fee.

## Residuals and Foreign Levies

### RESIDUALS

Writers received nearly \$178 million in residuals in 1999—an increase of more than 20% over 1998. The largest increases were in made-for-television product rebroadcast on foreign free television and on basic cable. It should not be surprising that these very active areas are the focus of the upcoming negotiations.

While residuals dollars collected have increased, the amount to individual writers has not. The increase is due to, in large part, more programming time, both domestically and internationally. Consequently, there is more product used and more writers paid, however, writers are not paid more.

### FOREIGN LEVIES

Foreign collection societies send the WGA U.S. writers' share of foreign taxes and levies imposed on the sale of blank videocassette tapes and on the rental of videocassettes for the benefit of theatrical and television program authors. The WGA disbursed approximately \$2.9 million in foreign levy funds in the fiscal year ended March 2000. The Guild has paid writers in excess of \$8.4 million since the program's inception, and there has been substantial progress in the receipt and recording of information to expedite payments in the future.

The countries which generate such levies are (in descending order of importance) Argentina, Germany, France, Switzerland, Spain and several smaller European states. The WGA is actively seeking to generate levy collections in several Latin American and Eastern European countries.

### TOTAL RESIDUALS COLLECTED BY PROGRAM TYPE AND REUSE MARKET

(Millions of \$)

|                                       | <b>1999</b>    |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|
| <b>TELEVISION PROGRAMS</b>            |                |
| Network and Domestic Syndication      | 59.7           |
| Foreign Free Television               | 21.9           |
| Basic Cable                           | 12.8           |
| Videocassette/Pay TV                  | 4.4            |
| <b>Total Television Program Reuse</b> | <b>98.8</b>    |
| <b>THEATRICAL FILMS</b>               |                |
| Domestic & Foreign Television         | 22.8           |
| Videocassette/Pay TV                  | 53.1           |
| <b>Total Theatrical Films</b>         | <b>75.9</b>    |
| <b>OTHER RESIDUALS</b>                | <b>3.1</b>     |
| <b>TOTAL RESIDUALS COLLECTED</b>      | <b>\$177.8</b> |

Source: WGAw records. Note: Prior year figures are updated to include late-reported information.

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## Credits, Creative Rights and the WGA Awards

### CREDITS

The Guild's Credits Department determines the writing credits for all theatrical and television projects produced under the Guild's jurisdiction. Companies are required to submit a Notice of Tentative Writing Credits to the Guild and the participating writers at the end of principal photography in order for the Guild to determine the writing credits. In 1999, the Guild received close to 4,000 notices—slightly more than 200 in screen, with the balance in television. Of these determinations, approximately 200 were subject to the automatic arbitration provisions. In addition, there were more than 50 arbitrations due to protests from participating writers.

### NEW CREDITS MANUALS

In June 1999, WGAw and WGAE voted (by a margin of 96%) to approve new Screen and Television Credits Manuals. The new manuals, which went into effect as of July 1, 1999, reflect clarifications and some minor substantive changes in the rules for determining writing credits. Included in these changes is a new provision in screen, giving writers the opportunity to review the arbiters' decision letters if requesting an appeal to a Policy Review Board.

### CREDITS REVIEW COMMITTEE

The Credits Review Committee is a joint committee of WGAw and WGAE responsible for looking at the rules for determining writing credits and making recommendations for changes. Since the new manuals have been completed, the committee is focusing its efforts on considering more substantive changes in the credits rules. The CRC is currently in the process of seeking input from the membership to determine the areas in need of review.

### CREDITS ON THE INTERNET

The Guild recently stepped up its efforts to enhance enforcement of our credits provisions and monitor reuse (Article 64) compliance on the Internet. The WGAw is also developing relationships with database companies to ensure writing credits are accurately represented on the Web.

### CREDITS CORRECTED FOR BLACKLISTED WRITERS

The Blacklist Credits Committee is winding down its work in correcting credits on theatrical motion pictures. In 1999, the Committee corrected the writing credits on six additional films.

### THE "VANITY CREDIT" CAMPAIGN

The Guild continues its efforts to combat the vanity credit. The 1995 MBA set a time schedule for the companies to reduce the use of the possessive credit. Failing that reduction, the contract stipulated negotiations for a "balancing" credit for writers. Since the studios have failed to reduce significantly the on-screen use of the credit during the period May 1995 through May 1999, the Guild has requested formal bargaining on this issue. The Guild position is to eliminate the use of this credit. Absent agreement, the Guild can, among other options, seek a method to balance the granting of the credit to directors—a method that corrects the false impression given by the credit that the director is solely responsible for a film. These negotiations will continue throughout the year. This effort is being led by the Guild's Theatrical Committee on the Professional Status of Writers.

### COMMITTEE ON THE PROFESSIONAL STATUS OF WRITERS (CPSW)

In addition to fighting the vanity credit, the Theatrical CPSW continues to meet with studio CEOs to address a variety of creative



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rights issues. The Television CPSW, comprised of long-form writers, meets with network CEOs to discuss similar issues. The negotiating efforts of these committees are ongoing. Both committees remain committed to achieving greater recognition for the contributions of writers as well as increased participation for writers at all phases of the creative process.

### **SCREENWRITERS AND TELEVISION WRITERS COUNCILS**

The west members of the Theatrical CPSW also serve as the Guild's Screenwriter Council. In addition to negotiating with the CEOs about the vanity credit and creative rights for screenwriters, the Screenwriter Council advises the Board about a variety of matters of concern to screenwriters. Similarly, the Television Writers Council has provided invaluable guidance to the Board on topics ranging from on-screen credit for staff writers to efforts to increase diversity among writing staffs. Moreover as its first major action, the Television Writers Council proclaimed its support for the creative rights agenda being pursued by the Screenwriters Council/Theatrical CPSW. These Councils will continue to be a vital resource to the Board during the 2001 negotiations.

### **MEMBER SERVICES DEPARTMENT**

In addition to visiting episodic writers at their workplaces, the Member Services Department hosted lunches for these writers with Executive Director John McLean to keep them informed about important Guild matters and to solicit their input.

Economic and creative issues were aired at two Town Hall member meetings in April, 2000. WGAw Executive Director John McLean and members of the Guild's Board of Directors were in attendance to present and discuss the many critical

issues to be addressed in the upcoming negotiations that will conclude on May 1, 2001. Topics included basic cable, foreign TV residuals, the Internet, video/DVD, Fox and "netlet" residuals, made-for-pay TV residuals, creative rights and access issues.

The Member Service Department's outreach efforts to screen and television writers are expected to intensify as the Guild moves closer to the expiration of the current MBA. In addition, the department will continue to serve as a direct link to the Guild for individual screen and television writers who have issues regarding their individual employment or Guild services.

### **INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY REGISTRATION**

The Guild Intellectual Property Registration Service registered approximately 40,000 pieces of material during 1999.

### **THE 52ND ANNUAL WGA AWARDS**

On March 5, 2000, the WGA held its annual awards ceremony at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills. The WGA Awards receive national and international press coverage, providing a unique forum for writers to show the world, "Somebody Wrote That." Each year, a special group of writers are singled out for honorary awards. This year, the honorary awards presented by the Writers Guild of America, west were: Screen Laurel Award to Jean-Claude Carriere; the Paddy Chayefsky Laurel Award for Television to Paul Monash; the Valentine Davies Award to Alan Alda; the Morgan Cox Award to Ann Marcus; and the Paul Selvin Award to Eric Roth and Michael Mann for *The Insider*.

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## Contract Negotiations & Enforcement

### ENFORCEMENT

The Guild has placed special emphasis on key areas of MBA enforcement over the last year. Through these efforts, the Guild has improved compliance with many important provisions of the MBA, including those involving free rewrites, late pay, separation of rights, viewing the cut and others.

### FREE REWRITES

The Guild initiated its "bad guy" campaign to tackle the pervasive problem of free rewrites. This effort identifies specific problems without requiring writers to come forward with individual claims. The Guild hired Special Counsel to conduct an independent investigation and file arbitration cases against major theatrical and television producers to curb and ultimately halt the practice of free rewrites. The campaign got underway with the filing of five extraordinary arbitration cases in which the Guild seeks compensation on behalf of 55 writers employed on 46 projects by four major studios and a major television motion picture producer. These cases are being handled by the Guild's Strategic Initiatives Counsel, outside counsel and the Guild's Director of Legal Services. Thirteen writers have testified under Guild subpoena to date (including WGAw President John Wells and Vice-President Dan Petrie, Jr.). Hearings are scheduled to continue throughout the year. The Guild anticipates filing additional cases as its investigation progresses.

### LATE PAY

For many years, writers have been frustrated by late payment of compensation. The Late Pay Desk was established in 1998 to provide immediate assistance in obtaining prompt

payment. The Late Pay Desk not only responds to specific claims brought by writers, but also independently investigates potential claims regarding untimely payments without any writer having to come forward. The Late Pay Desk is also taking steps to address the issue on an industry-wide basis. The Late Pay Desk has thus far assisted 269 writers receive \$2.4 million in compensation.

### SEPARATION OF RIGHTS

Protection of a writer's separated rights in original literary material has also been a key focus of the Guild over the past year. The Guild's legal staff, with the support of the Contracts Department, won three key arbitration decisions concerning writers' rights to reacquire literary material in which they hold separation of rights. In the first, the Guild successfully prevented a studio from inflating the price it can charge for reacquired literary material. The arbitrator prohibited the studio from seeking reimbursement of money it paid under a producer's or director's term deal during development. In a second case, the Guild ensured that the subsequently acquiring company had the right to reacquire the material written by the original writers as well as that written by subsequent writers on the same project. The arbitrator agreed with the Guild that any other decision would result in a cloud over the acquiring company's title to the project. A third arbitration decision confirmed that writers can have separated rights in literary material based on real people and real events.

### THEATRICAL ON-SCREEN PLACEMENT OF WRITING CREDITS

The Guild has obtained virtually 100% compliance with the requirement that writing credit on theatrical motion pictures be no less than the second credit from the body of the film (except in very limited circum-

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stances.) The Guild continuously monitors compliance with this provision and has found no violations.

### **NAMES ON COVER PAGES**

Companies must list the names of all writers on a project on the cover page of a script. The Guild has conducted an ongoing educational campaign of company representatives and writers, provided standardized cover pages for use on an industry-wide basis, and mandated correction of violations or filed claims when necessary. When one studio recently failed to tell a writer it had previously employed other writers on a project and failed to list the previous writers on cover pages of scripts being circulated, the Guild filed an arbitration claim. The Guild garnered a highly favorable monetary settlement of damages to the writer and the Guild.

### **VIEWING THE CUT**

Writers of theatrical motion pictures and long-form television are entitled to view a cut of their films prior to the final cut. Company compliance with this requirement was sporadic. Guild efforts have significantly increased both theatrical and long-form television writers' opportunities to view a cut of their films at a meaningful time in the post-production process. Many writers have reported increased participation and improved working relationships.

### **STANDARD CONTRACTS**

The Guild has created two standard form contracts, one for theatrical motion pictures and one for long-form television. Use of these form contracts can hasten the drafting and payment process and ensure important information is included in the writer's contract. Many agents and writers have used these contracts to their advantage. These forms are available directly from the Guild and on the Guild's Web site, [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org).

### **WRITER/AGENT ALERTS**

The Guild's Agency Department continues to distribute Writer/Agent alerts as part of its continuing effort to enhance enforcement of the MBA. The topics of the alerts during the last year covered uncompensated rewrites and the presentation of the Guild's short form theatrical and television (MOWs or miniseries) standard writing contracts. There are over 400 franchised agencies that represent some 5,500 current active WGA members. The Agency Department receives a daily average of over 150 telephone requests for member representation and contact information. In order to facilitate contact between potential employers and members, the Guild is researching the feasibility of placing this information on the WGA Web site.

## **Protecting & Extending WGA Jurisdiction**

### **CONTINUED SUCCESSSES IN ORGANIZING ANIMATION WRITERS**

The WGA continued its successes in organizing animation writers during the last year. The WGA now represents writers on virtually every primetime animated television show, including *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, *Futurama*, *Family Guy*, *The PJs*, *Sammy, God, the Devil and Bob*, *The Oblongs* and *Doomsday*. In addition, the WGA successfully organized writers on *Dilbert* and *The Downtowners a/k/a Mission Hill*. These primetime animation writers now receive the same rights and benefits as other Guild writers, including MBA minimum compensation, pension and health, residuals, merchandising and character payments. In addition to the primetime agreements, the WGA signed full MBA contracts on two animated theatrical projects.

Outreach in the animation area was another theme of 1999. The WGA Industry Alliances Department and the WGA Animation Writers Caucus (AWC) did extensive outreach to writers and agents through articles in *Written By Member News*, informational mailings and events. The AWC, now over 300 members strong, has monthly events at Hamptons and holds panels primarily related to the needs of daytime animation writers. In April 2000, the WGA Industry Alliances Department held its first meeting with theatrical animation writers.

The 1999 WGAw-AWC Animation Writing Award was given to Paul Dini for his outstanding contributions to the profession of the animation writer. Dini's credits include writing and producing the hit series *Batman Beyond*, and writing *The Batman/Superman Movie* and *Batman: Mask of the Phantasm*.

### **NONFICTION WRITERS COMMITTEE ORGANIZES**

The WGA Nonfiction Writers Committee was active last year in various ways. In September 1999, at the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, a venue where prominent nonfiction producers and writers congregate, the Writers Guild maintained a strong presence. In addition to a WGA-sponsored panel discussion, the first Writing Award, judged by members of the Guild, was given to Harry Marshall for his documentary film *Bhutan: The Last Shangri-La*. Also, in the fall, the first networking event for nonfiction writers was held at the Guild, and writers, Guild Officers and WGA Industry Alliances Department staff participated in a frank discussion regarding how best to organize this sector of the industry.

In addition, WGAw nonfiction writers participated in the successful PBS contract negotiations. Through this effort, writers of documentaries and public affairs programs now receive health coverage for a one-hour program.

## **Engaging the Public Agenda**

### **LEGISLATION: A.B. 83**

After five months of negotiations between Guild staff and representatives of the City of Los Angeles, on April 11, 2000, the Los Angeles City Council voted 14-0 to withdraw opposition to WGAw-sponsored legislation that will prohibit cities and counties in California from imposing business taxes and home occupation permit requirements on writers and other artists who receive income from employment, including residuals and royalties. At press time, A.B. 83 is pending a hearing in the state Senate.

### **PRE-1960 RESIDUALS**

The Guild continues its efforts on behalf of writers whose creative work for television and film was produced before 1960. This issue is heating up and will be a major focus of the Guild's legislative efforts in the coming year.

### **HONORING THE PAST**

The first two sections of the Guild's historical design project have been created and installed, in conference rooms 3A and 2B at the Guild headquarters. Room 3A features a three-part art piece about Philip Dunne, screenwriter of such classics as *How Green Was My Valley* and *The Ghost and Mrs. Muir* and the only writer with a star on the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In room 2B, early women screenwriters, including Frances Marion, Anita Loos, Dorothy Parker, Bess Meredyth and others are spotlighted. The artwork for both was designed and constructed by the Warner Bros. Studios Sign Department; the text was written by past WGAw President Del Reisman.

### **FILM FESTIVALS**

The Guild currently takes part in a variety of film festivals, including the Sundance Film

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Festival, AFI Los Angeles International Film Festival, the Los Angeles Independent Film Festival, the Acapulco Black Film Festival, the Jackson Hole Wildlife Film Festival, the City of Lights, City of Angels: A Week of French Films, Los Angeles International Shorts Festival, Resfest, the Latino International Film Festival and the Seattle Film Festival. At these events, festival-goers are given the opportunity to engage in informal discussions with screenwriters, hear script readings and register their intellectual property on-site. In addition, the Guild's sponsorship of the Best Writer Award (awarded at the L.A. Independent, AFI and Seattle film festivals) has raised public awareness of writers and proved to be an effective way to reach independent filmmakers.

### **WRITERS IN THE MEDIA**

At its five annual press receptions (Summer and Winter Screenwriter Receptions, Television Critics Association Reception, Emmy Nominee Reception and WGA Award Nominee Reception), the Guild brings together hundreds of writers and key entertainment journalists from both local and national media outlets. These receptions give writers the opportunity to develop relationships with journalists that often lead to increased and improved media coverage of writers and their work.

### **DIVERSITY**

The Guild's Employment Access Department continues to be an industry leader in the areas of diversity and access. The department recently hosted a high-profile roundtable dialogue on diversity which featured guest Alexis M. Herman, United States Secretary of Labor. The meeting was attended by 50 top executives from television networks, agencies, the Academy of Television Arts and Sciences as well as representatives from the WGA, SAG and DGA. The department also

initiated ads published in the Hollywood Reporter and Variety urging increased hiring of underrepresented writers.

The WGAw's diversity efforts also included stepped up enforcement of EEO and freelance writers provisions in the MBA, greater field presence at the networks, studios and production companies, and a statistical survey of television employment of protected class writers.

Further strides in diversity were made when the Guild hosted a networking reception and dinner at Guild headquarters. In attendance were television and film executives, producers, WGAw committee members, members at-large and Board members.

### **MEMBER EVENTS**

#### **Oscar Party**

Several hundred Guild members spent Oscar night together, cheering for their peers at the first-ever WGAw Member Academy Awards Viewing Party at the WGA Theater in March, 2000. The evening was sponsored by Compaq Computers and McMorgan & Company.

#### **Member Holiday Party**

It's become a winter tradition—members revel together and ring in the New Year at the WGA Theater in Beverly Hills. The reception is an opportunity for members to swap stories and consider their prospects for the upcoming year. This year an astrologer was on hand to make predictions for the year 2000.

### **DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ALLIANCES**

In December, 1999, the WGAw, WGAE and DGA signed an agreement with the General Society of Authors and Editors of Spain (*Sociedad General De Autores y Editores* or SGAE) for joint cultural activities to enhance the professional development of U.S. and Spanish writers and directors, and to promote the exhibition of their works. The activ-



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ities for 2000 will include Spanish film festivals in the U.S. and professional exchanges among U.S. and Spanish writers and directors in the U.S. and Spain. Funding for the joint cultural exchange is derived from a portion of the monies earmarked for the promotion of Spanish cinema and television and its artists collected from the levies on the sales of blank videotapes and video recording hardware in Spain.

### **WRITTEN BY MAGAZINE**

The WGAw magazine, *Written By*, continued its growth with an impressive nine nominations from the Western Publishers Association. The magazine walked away with a "Maggie" for its series of articles, *Writers of Conscience and Crisis of Conscience*. *Written By* was nominated in these categories: Best Overall Design/Trade; Best Communication, Advertising & Entertainment publication; Best Interview or Profile/Trade (*Steve Martin: Writer*); Best Signed Editorial or Essay/Trade (*Confessions of a Violent Movie Writer*); Best Regularly Featured Department, Section or Column/Trade (*The Writer's Life*); Best Single Editorial Illustration/Trade (*Lessons From Noodles*); Best Single Editorial Photograph/Trade (*On the Beat: A Conversation with NYPD Blue's David Milch*) and Special Theme Issue/Trade.

Portions of *Written By* are made available on the Guild's Web site, so site visitors from around the world may have the opportunity to glimpse into the world of the professional writer.

### **WRITTEN BY MEMBER NEWS**

The Guild's newsletter continues to be a vital vehicle for news and information about the Guild and its activities. *Member News* mailings will expand in months to come, as a new Negotiations 2001 supplement will address issues specific to the upcoming contract negotiations.

Aside from the obvious communications benefits of the *Member News*, the publication has also served to consolidate Guild mailings, thus saving significant mailing and associated costs. It has also provided an excellent means to reduce the mail members receive from the WGAw.

The *Member News* is also available each month on the Guild's Web site, ensuring that critical Guild information can be disseminated immediately.

### **THE GUILD WEB SITE**

The Guild's site, [www.wga.org](http://www.wga.org), receives 1.5 million "raw" hits per month, and is visited by more than 2,200 unique visitors a day. In addition, nearly 12,000 people currently subscribe to the site's electronic newsletter, *Now Playing*.

A recent addition to the site is a Distributor Title Search Database for WGA Signatory Projects—a searchable database which lists motion picture and television titles produced under the jurisdiction of the WGA. This database will enhance enforcement efforts and ensure that writers will receive the residuals due to them.