

Engaging the Public Agenda

ENHANCING THE PROFILE OF WRITERS

2003 featured the unveiling of the 70th Anniversary Campaign, which paid tribute to the creativity and imagination of our members. Writers such as Amy Heckerling, Robert Towne, Billy Wilder & I.A.L. Diamond, Steven Bochco, and Callie Khouri were featured on billboards and movie screens around town accompanied by famous quotes from their work. The campaign, spearheaded by member Mark Norman and the Marketing Department, and designed and produced by the Publications Department, was well received by industry, press, and peers. The campaign, and specifically the Billy Wilder/I.A.L. Diamond billboard that appeared on Sunset Blvd., has been nominated as a finalist in the Entertainment/Leisure Category of the Sunset/Times Square Billboard Awards 2004.

The Guild continued to be actively involved in film festivals in the Los Angeles area and beyond with the aim to increase screenwriter awareness and to spread the message about Guild pro-

grams that can help up-and-coming writers, such as the Intellectual Property Registry, the Independent Film Program, and the Employment Access Department. Festivals supported included the Sundance Film Festival, the Austin Film Festival and Screenwriters Conference, the Los Angeles Film Festival, Outfest, the Pan African Film Festival, the City of Lights/City of Angels festival, and several others.

Under the direction of the Public Affairs



ANNIVERSARY CAMPAIGN PHOTOS BY MARK HANAUER

Department, there was an array of high-profile receptions. They included *Sublime Prime-time: An Evening with Emmy Nominated Writers and Beyond Words: The Writers Talk* (co-sponsored by the Writers Guild Foundation and the Guild's Media Relations Committee), plus receptions with television and broadcast film critics (co-created by the Marketing Department), where the emphasis continues to be the creative talents of writers.

Functioning as a full-service press office in addition to hosting several high-profile media events, the department received more than 1,000 press inquiries last year. Reaching a global audience via both national and international outlets, the department staff regularly placed stories about television and screenwriters. To accommodate late-breaking news, a press liaison is available to handle all breaking press inquiries 24/7.

PUBLIC POLICY

The Guild has been actively engaged from Washington, D.C., to Sacramento to Los Angeles on the legislative front. The Guild filed statements with the FCC in opposition to changes in the ownership rules that would have allowed companies to further consolidate the American media marketplace. The WGAw President testified before the FCC and actively lobbied in Washington to maintain the current rules and to encourage production independent of the major companies. Working in coalition with other guilds, unions and public-interest groups, the Guild helped to build a nationwide, grassroots coalition that had a major impact on Congress.

The Guild also joined with other guilds and entities in support of legislation to curb run-

away production and to fight piracy.

In Los Angeles, the Guild has been at the forefront of efforts to change the implementation of the city's business tax. At press time, the Guild is working with members of the City Council on an ordinance that would exempt writers and other talent from the imposition of the tax.

THE 56TH WRITERS GUILD AWARDS

The 56th Annual Writers Guild Awards reached a major milestone this year as the awards show was televised for the first time in the Guild's history, featuring a wide array of film and television talent and generating its most extensive media coverage ever. The show aired on the Starz-Encore channel.

The Guild held a first-ever Honorary Service Awards luncheon to honor those members who contribute valuable volunteer time to the organization, writers, and the community-at-large.

Embodying both talent and vision, as well as a long-time commitment to the Guild and community-at-large, this year's honorary award winners included Screen Laurel recipient John Michael Hayes, Paddy Chayefsky TV Laurel Award recipient Loring Mandel, Valentine Davies recipient Neal Baer, Morgan Cox recipient James D. Buchanan, Paul Selvin Award recipient Jason Horwitch (for his teleplay *The Pentagon Papers*), and AWC Animation Writing Award winner Mark Evanier.

WRITTEN BY MAGAZINE

Written By continues to raise its public profile as the Guild's flagship publication. At its annual award ceremony, the Greater Los Angeles Press Club presented the magazine



PHOTO BY LEROY HAMILTON

with a first place prize as the outstanding “In House or Corporate Publication.” *Written By* also received two design awards, including the prestigious national journalism organization Folio’s Ozzie Award/Gold Award for best use of Digital Imagery, and the Western Publications Association’s Maggie for Best Single Editorial Photo/Illustration. The popular and much-discussed summer fiction issue focusing on great unproduced screenplays resulted in a staged, standing-room-only reading at the Barnes & Noble Bookstore in the Grove, as well as newspaper articles in the *San Francisco Chronicle* and the *Los Angeles Times*, and FM radio discussions on KCRW and KPPC. Cover portraits continued to honor writers as celebrities, ranging from Frank Pierson to Ed Solomon and Ann Marcus. In keeping with this goal, the September issue honored the Guild on its 70th anniversary by reprinting photographs from its noted trade ad and billboard campaign.

Written By and all other Guild publications are designed and produced in-house. The Publications Department staff prepares all

pre-press materials, which generates a substantial cost savings.

MEMBER NEWS/MEMBER COMMUNICATIONS

Member News brings the world of the Guild to members on a monthly basis, covering everything from Guild business and pertinent legal and legislative news to Guild events and the monthly calendar. The newly redesigned publication reduced the cost per issue while simultaneously increasing the space available for news and images. For the first time, *Member News* was nominated for a Maggie Award, in the category of Most Improved Publication.

During Negotiations, several *Negotiations Update* newsletters have been produced to provide members with the latest information about the status of negotiations and the issues of concern. In addition to the printed versions, the *Member News* and *Negotiations*



Update newsletters are available at WGA.org.

On a monthly basis, an updated events calendar is sent by e-mail to all members who have provided e-mail addresses—currently about two-thirds of the Guild’s active membership. The e-mail list is also used to inform members about updated news as needed.

THE GUILD WEBSITE

While the Guild’s WGA.org website remains a crucial link in promoting writers to the industry and the public-at-large, it has evolved into a more integral part of the Guild’s daily business. This is a trend that will continue and accelerate. For both members and the media, the Guild has sought to use the website more regularly as an outlet for instant information dissemination. More routine forms and booklets are also readily available at no cost online. There are 13,000 subscribers to the website’s *Now Playing* biweekly newsletter. Traffic on the site averages more than 3 mil-



lion hits per month. The website is now produced completely in-house by the Publications Department staff, in conjunction with the Information Technology Department staff, at a considerable cost savings. The home page has received a facelift and navigation has been simplified, making tools and services easier for Guild members and other site visitors to use.