



Past presidents of the Guild supported the striking reality TV show writers.

## WE'RE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER

### ENSURING EVERYONE A PLACE AT THE TABLE

We believe all writers who pen stories for any moving image content should be guaranteed minimum compensation, basic benefits, residuals and proper credits through a WGA contract regardless of the media distribution platform.

As our industry continues to expand entertainment to audiences worldwide through the use of new and more fluid technologies, we too must expand our coverage of writing done for these platforms. By standing together, we ensure all writers are covered. By standing together, we ensure our futures.

In order to achieve this objective, the WGAW has increased its resources devoted to organiz-

ing. The Organizing Department's mission is to ensure that every writer in every part of the entertainment industry is covered by WGA benefits and protections. Here are some highlights from this year's organizing efforts:

### ANIMATION

While the Guild already represents writers in primetime such as *The Simpsons*, *Family Guy* and *King of the Hill*, the rest of the animation market remains mostly outside of WGAW coverage. Some progress was made in animated feature films this year, with WGAW coverage for *Everyone's Hero* and *Monster House*.

Both the East and West Animation Writers caucuses engaged animation writers in a survey to collect detailed data about recent

animation wages and working conditions. The final results are expected to be published mid-2007.

#### BASIC CABLE

This year, the WGAW stepped up its efforts to bring companies producing shows for cable under WGA contracts. The effort began with outreach to a variety of writers including those at Comedy Central, who joined together to demand recognition so they could be covered by the MBA. Their efforts to stand united for a contract brought Comedy Central to the negotiating table, where we reached groundbreaking agreements covering *American Body Shop*, *Mind of Mencia*, *Showbiz Show with David Spade* and *The Sarah Silverman Program*.

#### NONFICTION & REALITY TV

Nonfiction and reality TV writers are redefining how writers create story. Sometimes they use narration, sometimes they create reenactments of actual events, and sometimes they spend hours selecting and crafting storylines directly from hours of raw footage.

This past summer, a dozen writers demanded union recognition from their employer for the show *America's Next Top Model*. When the employer refused to recognize the Guild and negotiate in good faith, the *Top Model 12* went on strike.

During the next two months, hundreds of WGAW members walked the picket line to support them.



On Sept. 20, 2006, nearly 1,000 writers attended a unity rally at Pan Pacific Park in Los

Angeles.

Although the strike did not succeed in achieving a contract, our strong stand demonstrated

to the industry that all writers are united and committed to getting coverage for reality television writers.

To date more than 1,000 storytellers have signed cards seeking WGA representation for nonfiction and reality TV writing. WGAW-supported actions have included class action lawsuits and claims with the California Department of Labor Standards Enforcement against production companies and networks for their violations of California wage and hour laws. Through these and other methods, we are letting employers know that we are all





in this together and that nonfiction and reality TV could not be successful if it weren't for the writer.

#### **NEW MEDIA**

Mobile phones and the Internet can now stream content as easily as your TV set does. Because audiences are shifting the time spent between Internet viewing, watching TV, and catching a short show or movie on a cellphone, companies are becoming more flexible and creative about how they put content together.

This year, the writers of the hit series *Lost* made history when they refused to write completely new shorts related to the hit TV show that would be viewable only on mobile phones... that is, they refused until they were WGA-covered. ABC came to the negotiating table, and the first "mobisode" series writing agreement was reached. The WGAW then negotiated a deal to cover CBS soaps to be run on the Internet. More recently, the WGAW received a favorable arbitration decision in a case involving NBC webisodes, reaffirming the right of the Guild to bargain over terms and conditions, and the right of writers, and the union, to refuse to do the work until acceptable terms are negotiated.

The WGAW has also covered a variety of videogames and original online projects by means of individual side-letter agreements. Nearly a dozen employers have opted to use these special agreements to ensure that writers received-pension and health benefits. Writers on the *Family Guy* videogame were able to secure protection on credits and recognition of back-

end compensation when they stood together during negotiations with their employer.

#### **CAUCUS MEMBERSHIP GROWS IN 2006**

During the 2006 year the Guild's writing caucuses have worked to increase their memberships. The Animation Writers Caucus membership increased by 3 percent, New Media Caucus membership grew by 95 percent and the Nonfiction Writers Caucus membership increased by 21 percent. All of the caucuses are dedicated to educating and organizing in their respective genres.

#### **MEMBER SERVICES**

The Member Services Department's mission is to facilitate communication between the members and their Guild and to provide forums and structures for the Guild's membership to participate more effectively in their union. The department carries out that mission in a broad variety of ways—from helping an individual member navigate obscure corners of the Guild's agreements to organizing a member rally of more than 1,000 people. The last two years have seen a new focus by the Guild's leadership on member communication and outreach, and the department's staffing reflects this new priority—growing from two positions to five positions.

In the year just past, the department has focused on outreach and communication to the membership—with the goal of preparing the Guild and the members for the upcoming negotiations for a new 2007 MBA. While maintaining the television show visit program that has been ongoing for the past five years in visiting almost 60 television series, we've broadened the scope of the department. We also co-hosted, with the Screen Actors Guild, five joint show visits with both writers and principal cast in attendance, and hosted the

inaugural Television Showrunners' Dinner, an extensive series of member outreach meetings in which members have opened up their homes to fellow writers. On Sept. 20, 2006, a Unity Rally in support of the writers of *America's Next Top Model* was held at Pan Pacific Park in Los Angeles. More than 1,000 people attended, including writers from scripted television, feature films, news writers and non-scripted or reality television. In addition, the department co-hosted six screenwriter luncheons and a first-ever dinner of the active screenwriting community.

The department's focus for the upcoming year is to assist the Guild in achieving a new 2007 MBA that adequately protects the interests of its members. The department will continue all of its ongoing outreach efforts with a special focus on the issues and events surrounding the negotiations.

## WHAT THE FUTURE BRINGS

### SHOWRUNNER TRAINING PROGRAM

Early in 2007, 24 writers were chosen for the second Showrunner Training Program, which ran every Saturday for six weeks. The program, agreed upon in the 2004 negotiations, was designed to help promising writers develop successful showrunning skills.

Nearly 100 writers sent in applications for the program. In order to be eligible, they had to be recommended by either a current or recent showrunner or by a creative studio or network executive. The curriculum emphasized the importance of management skills, and included such topics as: From Writer to Manager, Managing Writers & the Script Process, Managing Production & Directors, Managing Actors & Executive Relationships, Managing Post Production and Managing Your Career.

The more than 20 guest speakers and instruc-



tors included a virtual Who's Who in the showrunner world as well as prominent television directors, producers, actors and development executives, all of whom were generous with their time and expertise. Once again, the program received universally positive response from the participants. In addition to the flagship program, the Guild offered a half-day seminar for those who applied but were not accepted into the program, as well as a separate daylong session about how to budget for a television series.

The Showrunner Training Program Committee is composed of prominent showrunners as well as two company representatives.

### DIVERSITY

Guild members feel strongly that writers from diverse backgrounds should have a chance to succeed in film and television. The Diversity Department works to encourage positive change in hiring practices, to promote a more positive image of historically underemployed writers and to increase awareness of the unique obstacles often faced by these writers.

To that end, the department works with producers, studio and network heads, and writers themselves to increase employment opportunities and writing assignments for writers who are black, Latino, Asian/Pacific Islander, American Indian, women, over 40, gay and lesbian,

or writers with disabilities.

Charged with building cultural bridges between industry executives, producers and writers who are demographically underrepresented—both within the membership as well as those who work in areas not yet covered by the Guild—the Diversity Department coordinates and attends meetings with studios, networks, production companies, agencies and sister Guilds to discuss diversity issues, statistics and joint projects.



The department works with studios on their individual access programs, such as the Disney Studios/ABC Entertainment Writing Fellowship Program, to discover and employ culturally and ethnically diverse writers in the feature film and television areas.

In addition, the department is responsible for administering the freelance access requirement of the Guild's contract, which offers new writers an opportunity to be introduced to television writing. This option makes it practical to employ new writers from diverse backgrounds.

The Diversity Department staff works with several WGAW member committees to develop events that range from panel discussions on the craft of writing to networking opportuni-

ties with industry producers and executives. In the past year, the staff supported the leadership of seven such committees to stage 41 diversity outreach programs. The department participates in numerous events with external organizations including panel discussions at ethnic film festivals and industry conferences with a focus on improving the status and the image of diverse writers in film and television.

In the coming year, the department will be tackling a variety of new programs and extending its advocacy throughout the industry. Shortly after our new Director of Diversity was hired, the 2007 Hollywood Writers Report was issued at a press conference in May 2007, timed to coincide with television staffing season. This report, the sixth commissioned by

the WGAW, provides statistical analysis of hiring trends of writers in the motion picture and television industry. To quote UCLA Professor Darnell Hunt, author of the report, "Findings from the report show that minimal progress has been made in opening up the industry to women and minority writers in recent years."



These results reveal a need to rethink “business as usual” and to work towards the creation of a new paradigm for diversity. Followup to the Writers Report will include in-depth industry diversity summits and new training and mentoring programs for writers at a variety of levels, as well as a retooling of the department database in order to improve the dissemination of diversity-related information to the industry.

### THE INDIE WORLD

The Guild is constantly reaching out to new screenwriters by conducting industry and academic outreach and encouraging independent filmmakers to seek Guild protections and participate in its community of writers.

In 2006, the number of narrative Low Budget Agreements (for theatrical films budgeted below \$1.2 million) grew to 100, with 14 such agreements signed within the year. First offered in 2002, the “LBA” enables both members and non-members to request partial or total deferments of the screenplay purchase price, first rewrite compensation and publication fees, while ensuring Guild protections and benefits.

The Documentary Screenplay Contract was established last year for screenwriters and filmmakers seeking WGA coverage with employment terms geared to the unique process of low-budget documentary filmmaking. Theatrical side-letter agreements continue to be negotiated on a case-by-case basis. In addition, mailings and other targeted outreach encourage screenwriters credited on non-Guild theatrical releases to seek coverage in the future and join the Guild.

### INDEPENDENT WRITERS CAUCUS

The Independent Writers Caucus (IWC), which is overseen by the Independent Film

Writers Steering Committee, has grown to 305 members, an increase of 17 percent since this time last year. This caucus was formed in the fall of 2002. Its goals include raising writers’ status and influence within the low budget and independent film community, expanding writers’ coverage in low budget/independent films through the use of Guild agreements, and increasing emerging writer/filmmaker membership in the WGAW.

### FESTIVALS AND OTHER MARKETS

Last year, the Guild participated in more than a dozen film festivals and markets, with concentrated efforts at the Sundance Film Festival, South By Southwest, SilverDocs and the Los Angeles Film Festival. The goal is of these outreach efforts is to promote the interests of independent and low-budget narrative and documentary screenwriters. In-person presentations have also taken place at Sundance and Film Independent Screenwriter and Producer labs, academic institutions including USC, UCLA and Columbia College, and at film industry panels and events. Co-sponsorship agreements were brokered with the Sundance Institute, Film Independent, Filmmakers Alliance and Slamdance. The Guild also continues its strong ties with the International Documentary Association.

The WGAW’s Independent Film Program works to enhance the status and rights of independent and low-budget screenwriters. Committee members and staff spearhead the Guild’s involvement in independent film research, outreach and educational activities.

