



February 2004

WGA Shakeup

Victoria Riskin came back from the New Year's holiday weekend to an unpleasant surprise: her legitimacy as WGA West president was being challenged. A 35-page report written by Stanford law professor William Gould IV charged that Riskin was ineligible to run for office last fall, when she was elected to a second term as president. At issue was whether Riskin was an active member at the time of the election, a prerequisite for guild officeholders. After the revelation, events moved at a stunning pace, even by Hollywood standards. Within a day, the WGAW national board convened for an hours-long session to hear evidence from Gould, Riskin and her attorney. At the end of the meeting, Riskin resigned, leaving vp Charles Holland in the top post.



The shakeup comes at a delicate time for the guild. With the Minimum Basic Agreement set to expire with the Alliance of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences (AMPTP) May 2, initial feelers have indicated a wide gap between the two sides on key issues. When the Alliance's top brass got a look at the guild's initial pattern of demands in December, AMPTP president Nick Counter responded to the 25-point list by saying, "It looks like a disaster waiting to happen. I can unequivocally say that this is the most excessive package of demands we have ever seen."

Along with the list of proposed demands, which was sent to the membership for ratification, a letter was included from Riskin and WGA East president Herb Sargent. The opening remarks set a tone that may have put producers on edge for the upcoming talks: "What is clear to everyone – writers and employers alike – is that we will be negotiating in an exceedingly prosperous new atmosphere. It is a prosperity we helped to create and whose benefits we deserve to share."

Producers may not agree with that sentiment, especially when it comes to the contentious issue of DVD and video residuals. The WGA letter to members asserts that DVDs have become a bonanza money-maker for the studios, with writers failing to reap any of the rewards. According to the guild's figures, DVD revenues have gone from \$1.4 billion to \$11 billion in the past four years, with writers receiving just \$18 million of that \$11 billion, or less than one-sixth of one percent.

Other major issues in the WGA's pattern of demands include:

- Increasing employer contributions to the health and pension plans. Last year the guild was forced to cut benefits and charge its members a premium for the first time in order to keep the plans alive.
- Increasing residuals for basic cable, premium cable, and the UPN and WB networks.
- Expanding WGA coverage in animation and reality programming, two

Media Services Showbiz Software Stores

Specials this month:

Showbiz Contracts
\$59.95 - normally \$99!

Gorilla Pro Version 2.0
\$357.95 - normally \$397!

Frame Forge 3D Studio
Only \$247.95 - normally \$347!

Movie Magic Budgeting/Scheduling
Both for only \$1,199 - normally \$1,498!

Final Draft 6
Only \$169.95 - normally \$247!

Free Seminars in NYC and L.A. offices:

Feb 6	Production Payroll
Feb 11	Showbiz Software Demos
Feb 12	Movie Magic Training
Feb 20	EP Budgeting Training
Feb 23	MediaWin Training
Feb 25	Production Pro/Gorilla/ Reel Calendar Demos

These informational seminars are held at Media Services offices and are absolutely free. For more information, go to www.media-services.com or e-mail info@media-services.com.

Media
S E R V I C E S
Your Payroll & Software Solution®

areas that Riskin had been aggressive in pursuing over her first term.

- Improving protections against free rewrites.

At press time, no timetable for formal negotiations had been established.

For Your Consolidation

Despite the narrow defeat of the consolidation referendum last year, the SAG membership is still interested in a plan for merging with AFTRA, according to a telephone survey of 800 guild members across the country. In the survey, which was conducted by Peter D. Hart Research Associates in the late fall of 2003, respondents were polled about their level of satisfaction with various aspects of the industry today, and were given a chance to voice their opinions of what the priorities of the guild should be. Not surprisingly, members who made more than \$7,500 last year listed health insurance as the number one issue, while those making less than \$7,500 wanted the union to focus on work opportunities for members.



On the question of consolidating SAG and AFTRA, 61% of members polled reported having a favorable attitude towards consolidation; while 17% were somewhat unfavorable; 16% were very unfavorable, and 6% were not sure. Geographically, support for consolidation broke down as follows: California 56%, New York/New Jersey/Connecticut 65%, and 73% support from other areas combined. SAG is highlighting the 61% overall favorable rating, which seems particularly significant because the referendum vote last July fell just short of the 60% majority needed to pass.

"I am gratified to see that the survey results confirm that our members want us to continue to find a way to bring these unions together in unity and strength," said SAG president Melissa Gilbert. "We all know we all need more jobs, acceptable wages and benefits for our families, but we need to dig deeper to find ways that we can deliver solutions to those issues in the context of a plan that is responsive to our members. Face-to-face focus groups are underway in Los Angeles, and we should have some very clear messages from the rank and file as to how to proceed."

Polling results of the survey were handed out to SAG national board members at their January meeting.

Scripts Improve Timing

After years of lamenting the late delivery of scripts for episodic TV, the DGA finally has some good news to report: the problem is "beginning to show signs of improvement." This according to the mid-season results of the guild's script delivery tracking program, which was set up to monitor the progress of writers and studios in delivering timelier scripts. The DGA attributed the changeup to their persistent efforts over the past two years to bring the issue to light and to put pressure on the studios, networks and showrunners to effect a change.

According to the study, at mid-season CBS had a perfect record, with all 30 of its one-hour episodic TV scripts delivered on time. Fox was performing well, with 52 out of 57 (92%) on-time scripts thus far. These studios also won the prize for greatest improvement over last season's script tracking results, performing about 32% and 53% better than last season, respectively. Universal had delivered 40 out of 41 scripts on time, a 27% improvement over last season; Sony had 27 out of 28 timely deliveries, a 23% improvement; and Warner Bros. had delivered 65 out of 96 scripts on time, approximately 25%

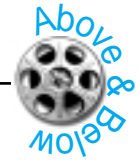
better than last season. (DGA script tracking for the 2002-2003 season began September 30, 2002.)

"The change in script delivery performance is promising," said DGA president Michael Apted. "I hope that the results will remain strong through the second half of the season. But if this is any indication of what's to come, we may see a change in the culture and practices in episodic television. And that would be a tremendously positive thing for us all."

Reel Production Calendar

Media Services has added a new production software package to our Showbiz Software Stores. Reel Production Calendar, from Reel Logix, touts itself as the only calendar program specifically designed for production. It is designed to give the user maximum control over the production calendar's look and feel, as well as the information contained within it. For example, Reel Production Calendar adjusts easily to big or small scheduling changes with a "push/pull" feature, so that you don't have to cut and paste large amounts of information to update your calendar. The program also lets you share the calendar with anyone on the project, choosing only those elements you wish to be displayed to others.

Reel Logix CEO Randy McGowan worked at Screenplay Systems for several years developing the Movie Magic line of products before starting the new venture with partners Philip Robinson and Yossi Cohen. "Reel Logix's mission is to revolutionize the project management process by making complex project management capabilities available to the average user," he says. "The company will allow small to large project teams the ability to easily collaborate on shared project data and easily create and track project requirements and schedules."



February 2004

The major features of Reel Production Calendar include:

- Complete control over color, size and style of every item in the calendar.
- Multiple calendars within a single file using hide and show to display and print only what you want.
- Push and Pull and drag and drop to easily adjust the calendar based on project changes. Lock items to days that cannot be moved.
- Notes imbedded with days or items like crews or sets, so that the notes move as the items do.
- Unlimited levels of undo, context menus, drag and drop, dockable windows and toolbars.
- Linked items so as one is moved others automatically move.

The software was released in December and is still available at the introductory price of \$89 (retail price is \$149). For more information, go to showbizsoftware.com or call 800-574-6924.

Red Carpet in Every Town

On Oscar night, it won't just be celebrities getting the red carpet treatment. The Academy of Motion Picture Arts & Sciences' (AMPAS) grassroots charity program, Oscar Night America, moves into its second decade this year, having raised nearly \$11 million for local charities around the United States during its first ten years of operation. A record 46 cities will participate in this year's program, which sanctions local charitable Academy Awards show viewing parties and provides them with some extra elements of glamour such as posters, programs and the use of the Academy's highly-protected Oscar logo.

Last year, Oscar Night America parties raised over \$1.7 million for local charities in 37 cities. Since its inception in 1994, the program has generated fund-

ing for a wide spectrum of charitable organizations... and according to AMPAS, every cent has stayed within the community where it was raised, with none of it going to the Academy.

For the 76th annual installment of the show, organizations from Seattle to West Palm Beach will attempt to re-create the glamour and excitement of the Academy Awards ceremony. All of the parties will feature a live big-screen broadcast of the Hollywood ceremony.

"Oscar Night has always been a night for friends and families to gather and cheer for their favorite films and stars," said Ric Robertson, executive administrator of AMPAS. "This nationwide network of fundraising parties is a natural extension of that shared experience."



Official Oscar Night America parties are provided with the same printed Academy Awards show programs as those handed out at the Kodak Theatre ceremony in Los Angeles. AMPAS also permits the party organizers to use the image of the Academy's copyrighted Oscar statuette on invitations and other materials, along with donating official commemorative posters and creating public service announcements for local broadcast.

Events are completely produced by local non-profit organizations, with the participation of the local ABC-TV affiliate station. Most of the parties are black-tie affairs, though some are less formal, with varied and distinctive touches. Some go so far as to ask partygoers to dress up as famous couples, while others feature limousine arrivals, walks down red carpets, celebrities, photographers or "paparazzi" and press interviews with arriving guests.



Only In The Movies



"Walkentalk"

Christopher Walken: the man, the myth, the mannerisms. Who could forget his classic cameo as Diane Keaton's psycho brother in "Annie Hall"? Or his scary turn as a telepathic prognosticator in "The Dead Zone"? But monologues are this man's forte, largely because of his captivating, sometimes baffling cadence, which has college men across the country quoting Walken lines from "Prophecy" to "Pulp Fiction."

So it was only a matter of time before someone devoted a film to the subject of Walken's curious speech patterns. Director Phil Zlotorynski has done just that with "Walkentalk," a ten-minute short that finds its hero, Chris, locked into an unrelenting pattern of mimicking his screen idol's bizarre vocal inflection. Although the world around him tries to badger him into conformity, Chris is able to ultimately turn his seeming handicap to his advantage.

"Walkentalk" most recently screened as part of the Comedy Shorts Program at the Egyptian Theater on January 28. For more info, go to www.walkentalk.com.

Every effort is made to get up-to-date and correct information for this newsletter.
This newsletter should not be construed as offering legal advice.
For information about the benefits of our payroll services and software products, contact any of our offices.
Publisher: Media Services, Inc.