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WRITERS GUILD OF AMERICA, EAST MEMBERS SPEAK OUT ON THE STATE OF THE FILM AND TELEVISION INDUSTRY

New York – The Writers Guild of America, East today released a survey of its film, television, and digital media members which details the breadth of their skills and experience and their opinions about the state of the entertainment industry and what the WGAE should be doing about it.

Members view television as a more writer-driven medium than feature film, and a growing slate of compelling, creatively satisfying shows is being produced for the small screen.

The appeal of this work seems to be reflected in the survey results:

- Although more than half of the respondents said they wrote feature films in the last five years, nearly 90% said they intend to seek Guild-covered work in television in the next year. In other words, screenwriters plan to explore opportunities in TV.

Most of the writers who answered the survey also performed other work in the entertainment industry in the last five years. About 45% said they have also produced; nearly 30% have directed; and about 18% have acted. Perhaps reflecting the cultural richness and diversity of the East Coast, WGAE members' writing takes many forms.

- In addition to their film, TV, and digital media writing
 - Nearly 20% of the survey respondents are also playwrights;
 - 20% write novels and short stories, and
 - 16% write nonfiction books and articles.
 - Ten percent write in nonfiction television, where the WGAE has pursued an industry-wide organizing campaign for several years.
 - And 17% of the respondents indicated they have been paid to write for digital media, over which the Guild first won jurisdiction in the 2007-2008 strike.

When asked to select the biggest challenges WGAE members will face in the next five years, half of the respondents identified the decreased number of feature films being made. Many also decried the lack of development deals in feature film and limited revenues from digital/online reuse.

When asked about the biggest opportunities for WGAE members in the next five years, 77% identified new production and distribution models in digital media, and nearly two-thirds said additional hours of scripted programming on TV and online.

Recognizing the limits of multiple-choice survey answers, the WGAE asked members to add their own comments on the industry and the Guild.

Here is a small sample:

- “What I’ve learned the last few years is that I have to be open to more kinds of work – feature, TV, cable, etc. – and then work much harder to get the job.”
- “Guild can work harder to represent animation writers, especially in features.”
- “There is far too much “free” work expected from producers and studios. This needs to change ASAP.”
- “Assignments are gone, or nearly so. Many more pitches before anyone will sign a contract.”
- “Still would love shows shot in NYC to be written here. Writers have not benefitted from the boom proportionally.”
- “[We need] a larger representation of women and minorities in every aspect of the industry.”
- “The movie end of the entertainment industry no longer wants to make dramas – i.e., movies about human beings.”
- “Every year I’m on the cusp of receiving health benefits but have never qualified.”
- “Having worked in TV and film, writers have much more to offer throughout the production on the TV side.”
- “It’s outrageous that the minimum script fees for cable are still less than for networks, with more and more writers in cable this has to be changed.”

Writers Guild of America, East

The Writers Guild of America, East, AFL-CIO (WGAE) is a labor union representing writers in motion pictures, television, cable, digital media, and broadcast news. The Guild negotiates and

administers contracts that protect the creative and economic rights of its members; conduct programs, seminars, and events on issues of interest to writers; and present writers' views to various bodies of government. For more information on the Writers Guild of America, East, visit www.wgae.org.

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