

ORGANIZER



May-June 2007

Protect Your Benefits and Livelihood

MAKE SURE NEW MEDIA IS DONE IA!

It's a brave new world. Gone are the days when visiting the local multiplex or turning on your home flat screen were the only ways to enjoy the hottest movie, video, or TV show. With advances in wireless technology, and improved broadband streaming via the Internet, Hollywood's biggest producers, as well as many low-budget independents, are in a frantic race to fill content pipelines that barely even existed a few years ago. Webisodes, mobisodes, and live events streamed wirelessly to cell phones are just the beginning of a new digital frontier that's changing so quickly, not even the engineers who build and design the technology know what's next.

To protect IATSE's jurisdiction in the entertainment industry, and to safeguard the future of your benefit contributions and minimum wage rates guaranteed under IA collectively bargained agreements, YOU MUST CALL your Local to report ANY TYPE of new media work, regardless of whether it's part of an existing network show. How else can your union ensure that ALL new media coming down the digital highway operates under an IATSE contract? Vigilance and participation by every IA member is vital to remain ahead of the technology curve, not behind it.

While no one knows for sure how the glut of new media will play out, here's a fact and fiction guide to help stay informed and on the ball:

- ◆ **FICTION:** New media is an insignificant portion of the entertainment industry that is used mainly to re-package existing product through short clips, trailers, or coming attractions.
- ◆ **FACT:** Fox Television Network has targeted millions of mobile phone users for its new "mobisode" spin-off series of "Prison Break," creating 2-minute shows that feature entirely new actors and stories. For its even more popular "24," a mobisode series was created with a new actor playing the Jack Bauer role (made

famous by the show's star, Kiefer Sutherland) and brand new storylines not seen on its network inspiration.

- ◆ **FICTION:** New media typically means a lack of production values, ultra-low budgets, and non-union crews.
- ◆ **FACT:** Most new media is shot with the same production values (and often by the same crews) as their network inspirations. Per-day budgets can range into the hundreds of thousands of dollars or even more if show is produced right alongside network shows, as several mobisodes have been. Some new media projects can cost far less to produce, and independents getting into this rapidly growing sector of the industry need to be reported to your IA Local as well.
- ◆ **FICTION:** New media outlets have limited economic potential and will never compete with traditional models for viewers.
- ◆ **FACT:** A Newsweek article reported original "webisodes" of NBC Universal's "Battlestar Galactica" were downloaded 5.5 million times in a 30-day span, more than double the amount of eyeballs the show receives every week on The Sci-Fi Channel!
- ◆ **FICTION:** Because the United States is leading the global charge in new media production,

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and progress has been slow and incremental, there is no imperative to organize this area of the industry.

◆ **FACT:** Most experts argue that the digital revolution has already been fought and won outside the United States: according to a recent publication by NATPE (National Associates of Television Program Executives) the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) spent \$350 million last year on content that will exist solely in a non-traditional media. DailyMotion.com, a successful video-sharing site, created in France, now allows viewers to download films double the running time (20 minutes) currently available on Google's mega-hit YouTube. Here in the U.S., experts say an original web-only "micro-series", with the same production values and unionized crews as a network show, can't be far behind.



◆ **FICTION:** New media content has no precedent in the entertainment industry and agreements that will guarantee member benefits and wage minimums will be difficult to create.

◆ **FACT:** Budgets and production formats for new media have many existing precursors in network, and cable television, as well as in commercial, music video, and other short format production. **THE KEY** to creating new agreements hinges on **ALL IA MEMBERS REPORTING** new media work to their locals in advance of production, so IATSE can organize in a timely and effective way.

No one believes the challenges ahead will be easy. Even the most devoted technophiles acknowledge the new media pipeline has been expanding at a dizzying rate. But what matters most is not the form, but the **CONTENT**, which will continue to be produced in accordance with the industry's

highest standards of quality and execution, by **UNION CREWS**.

Working men and women in this industry must protect what we have worked decades to achieve: collectively bargained agreements that

ensure each skilled crewmember receives benefit contributions, and minimum wage guarantees. As the old axiom goes, if you're not part of the solution, you're part of the problem. **PLEASE CALL YOUR IA LOCAL TODAY!** Organizing new media begins on the ground, and if we don't hit the digital highway running, we'll all be left standing on the shoulder.



Historic Breakthrough for Local 600 Publicists!

One of the highlights of the recent April Cooperative Meeting between IATSE and the Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers (AMPTP) was a first-ever commitment by Producers to pay health, benefit and Individual Account Plan (IAP) contributions on behalf of any Unit Publicist hired from or working in the New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, Chicago (Cook County) and the Baltimore/Washington D.C. areas. The contributions into the Motion Picture Industry Pension and Health Plans (MPI Plans) will be made at the West Coast rate, as provided for in the Hollywood Basic Agreement. Steven Poster, President of Local 600, said the new arrangement was “unprecedented” and a “significant development” to safeguard the health and welfare of Publicists not based or working on the West Coast.”

Benefits coverage on a national scale had been an issue for Producers dating all the way back to January of 2002, when The Publicists Guild merged with Cinematographers Guild Local 600. The agreement (with regard to benefit contributions) inherited by Local 600 at the time of the merger applied only to those Publicists hired from or working in Los Angeles County. Following the 2005 Basic Agreement negotiations, Producers consented to “grandfather” in, i.e. pay benefit contributions on behalf of those publicists who had been participants

in the MPI Plans for four or more years, regardless of where they lived or worked. However no provisions were made for those Publicists who did not have four or more years in the Plan. This most recent victory by IATSE representatives resolves that inequity, allowing Local 600 Unit Publicists who are hired or based outside Los Angeles County to breathe a sigh of relief, secure in the knowledge that their families’ futures will be protected.

“What President Short was able to do in this Cooperative Meeting,” notes Local 600 National Executive Director Bruce Doering, “was to close the circle for those Publicists who have been denied benefit contributions.” Adds Local 600 Eastern Regional Director Chaim Kantor, who worked closely with President Short in putting this Agreement together, “President Short looked at those areas [outside Los Angeles County] where Publicists were most concentrated and said these people need to be covered right now. We’ve been fighting for several years to have these members lay claim to the same benefit contributions as those Publicists on the West Coast.”

That time has finally come to pass. And as Steven Poster described in his recent announcement letter to Publicists, coverage with the MPI Plans is a “historic breakthrough” for this segment of the Local 600 membership.

Organizing Update

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Ping Pong Playa
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Project 880
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Show Me The Money
South of Nowhere
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Sweet 16
Two Sisters
You're The One That I Want

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