

Weinstein Co. Makes Interim WGA Agreement

Submitted by [MagnoliaFan](#) [1] on January 10, 2008 - 10:22pm

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Weinstein Co. gets interim WGA deal

Agreement nearly identical to United Artists'

By DADE HAYES

The Weinstein Co. has followed United Artists by inking a nearly identical interim agreement with the Writers Guild of America.

The pact will allow the pace of activity at the company to resume, though it does not cover genre arm Dimension Films. The move had been expected earlier in the week (Daily Variety, Jan. 10).

More than one option

Harvey Weinstein made no bones about his reasons for signing the deal, stressing his empathy for the striking writers and the hardships they've endured over the past 10 weeks.

He stressed that he supported a proposal from George Clooney that a blue-ribbon panel of actors and filmmakers be set up to mediate the dispute. The condition would be that no one would leave the room for 48 hours until a settlement was (theoretically) reached.

Clooney proposed that the panel include the likes of Steven Spielberg, Tom Hanks and other top A-listers.

"If a deal with the writers can be hammered out, other guilds would follow," Weinstein said. In the absence of such a solution, "The price being paid by the community as a whole is unthinkable."

Terms of the TWC's interim deal were not disclosed. A company rep said it closely followed the UA pact. The WGA has said it reached out to indie companies in an effort to rack up enough deals to gain leverage in the overall struggle.

Dimension topper Bob Weinstein is plotting his own course with regard to the strike. The genre arm's summer hits "1408" and "Halloween" gave a much-needed boost to the 2-year-old company last year.

The TWC interim pact probably comes as a greater relief to Weinstein execs, filmmakers and investors than to the Gotham film community as a whole. Along with new scripts coming in, certain key projects in the pipeline will get some wind in their sails, such as "Nine," the Rob Marshall musical adaptation that Michael Tolkin originally scripted.

Anthony Minghella, whose Mirage Entertainment recently reupped at TWC, plans to work on rewrites of "Nine." Cast members attached include Javier Bardem, Marion Cotillard, Penelope Cruz and Sophia Loren.

For the WGA, it's questionable whether the handful of interim deals inked in the past few weeks will be able to exert significant pressure on the majors.

During the 1988 writers strike, the guild strike 150 deals with companies of varying sizes, but to little gain. Then again, the revenue capabilities of indie companies are far greater 20 years later, so the incremental progress of interim dealmaking is something all of showbiz has had its eye on. Predictions that multiple mega-indies would follow UA's lead have yet to be realized.

There was no immediate response from the guild late Thursday, though it touted the UA deal with a message to members on Monday.

As for the AMPTP's reaction to the TWC pact, spokesman Jesse Hiestand reiterated Thursday his previous statement about the UA deal: "One-off deals do nothing to bring the WGA closer to a permanent solution for working writers. These interim agreements are sideshows and mean only that some writers will be employed at the same time other writers will be picketing. In the end, until the people in charge at WGA decide to focus on the main event rather than these sideshows, the economic harm being caused by the strike will continue."

The next WGA interim deals could come from year-old Overture Films and Nu Image/Millennium. Overture's indicated it's open to such a pact, and Nu Image chief Avi Lerner confirmed that he's in discussions to make a WGA deal akin to those brokered with UA and TWC.

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