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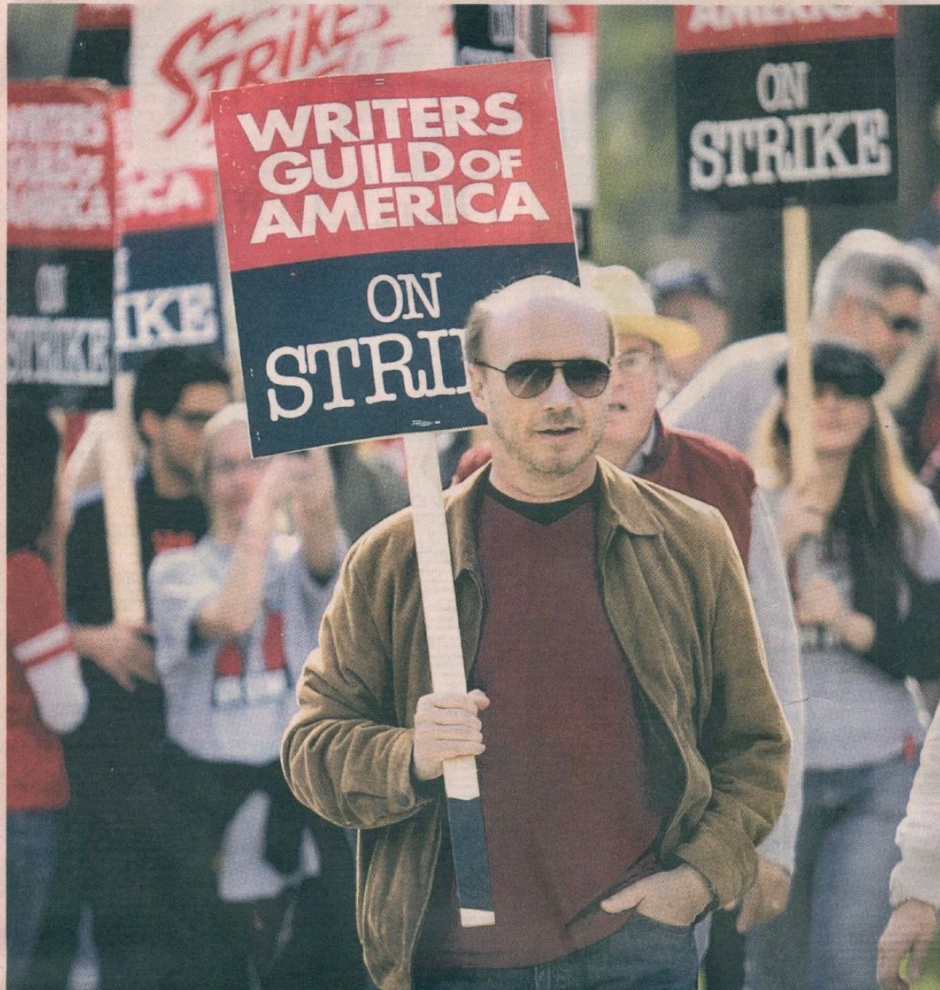
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STRIKE REPORT



MARK BOSTER Los Angeles Times

PICKETER: "I don't feel like I'm lining Warner Bros.' pockets by promoting it," Paul Haggis says of "In the Valley of Elah."

SCRIPTLAND

Talk it up or zip it?

Even writers vying for awards wrestle with the issue of publicity.

BY JAY A. FERNANDEZ
Special to The Times

IN their ongoing conflict with studio and network employers, Hollywood's screenwriters have been faced with plenty of tough decisions and juicy paradoxes. While the spectacle of the industry's most purely imaginative artists going to the mattresses with a set of economic proposals surely takes the top slot, the publicity conundrum has also taken on extra significance.

One of the hoariest maxims in the overstuffed pop culture manual is that there's no such thing as bad publicity. (I'd love to hear Roger Clemens comment on that one.) But lately, screenwriters — under normal circumstances a low priority during any film's publicity push — have been coping with the dilemma that promoting a film to further one's career will likely also help the

offending studio's bottom line, at a time when all eyes are finally on writers because of the strike.

"I do feel conflicted about doing publicity at this time, but my trusty flack makes sure everything I do is cleared with the WGA," e-mails Diablo Cody, who has been on a whirlwind, multi-continent tour to promote "Juno," her much-lauded debut screenplay. "Ultimately, it's good for all writers when a writer gets ink. When I showed up at the 'Juno' premiere, I heard some random guy in the crowd shout 'No publicity!' And I felt like, 'Listen . . . if you want writers to receive respect and recognition, then maybe we ought to be visible.'"

"In this case, my domestic [distribution] partners are in no danger of making money on this [See Scriptland, Page E10]

Broad won't hand off art

The financier's plan to not give away his collection to LACMA has echoes of the past.

By SUZANNE MUCHNIC
Times Staff Writer



DON KELSEN Los Angeles Times

REVERSAL: Broad has changed his strategy.

In a sharp reversal of oft-stated intentions, financier and philanthropist Eli Broad has decided to keep his collection of contemporary art instead of giving it to museums, a move likely to be interpreted as a blow to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art.

A leading collector of late 20th and 21st century art, Broad has amassed a 2,000-piece collection under a foundation that functions as a lending library and study center.

For years he has said he did not want to establish a private museum and ultimately would distribute the works to other institutions.

His agreement to finance the Broad Contemporary Art Museum — a \$50-million building opening in February at LACMA — and to stock it with works from his collections and establish a \$10-million acquisitions fund fueled hopes that the Wilshire Boulevard institution would be a major recipient of art gifts.

But the new development, reported Tuesday in the New York Times and confirmed in a printed statement and an inter-

view, turns the Broad Art Foundation into a permanent repository of artworks available to museums around the world.

The reversal of Broad's strategy might seem to put a damper on LACMA's introduction next month of its expanded and reconfigured campus.

He said he didn't plan to announce his decision now — the news just leaked out in an interview — but that the museum's leaders and staff were aware that his plans had changed over time.

"It's true that in the past, when asked, 'What are you going to do?' I said we will give the collection to one or several museums," Broad said by telephone Tuesday morning.

"The collection was significantly smaller then. Now it's [See Broad, Page E12]



HERE TO HELP: Dr. Drew Pinsky talks with Jeff Conaway, a costar on the '70s sitcom "Taxi," who has a tough time on the show.

VH1 puts reality TV into rehab

Striking writers face publicity dilemma

[Scriptland, from Page E1] film, so I don't feel like I'm lining Warner Bros.' pockets by promoting it," jokes Oscar-winning screenwriter Paul Haggis of his latest film, "In the Valley of Elah." "But even if it was more of a success, no, I wouldn't have any qualms about promoting it."

"Obviously, if I had to cross a picket line or go into a struck location to promote my show, I wouldn't do it," Haggis adds, pointing out that he's turned down several requests to do that for screenings of his film. "Even if it's just a symbolic gesture, I think it's an important one."

Though other concerns — such as the proper approach to the award shows and the contours of writers directing during the strike — have overshadowed the publicity problem, it's still an issue writers have wrestled with and debated with their publicists ever since Steven Zaillian, Oscar-winning writer of "American Gangster," declined to attend a guild screening and question-and-answer session in early No-

On the Web

Writers strike: For the latest on the Writers Guild work stoppage, read *The Times'* continuing coverage at latimes.com/hollywoodwriters. Find out the status of your favorite shows at latimes.com/thetvgrid.

vember.

For those in the rapidly accelerating awards hunt, it's an especially fraught situation. Though the Writers Guild of America strike rules do not prohibit members from doing publicity, most are actively seeking clarifications from the guild before committing to any events.

"Publicity's not writing services, it's not covered by the contract, so our position with members is that it's really up to their judgment and good conscience," says Tony Segall, general counsel for the WGA, West. "Obviously, some publicity helps struck com-

panies. We ask members to take that into account in deciding whether they want to cooperate in publicity efforts. But we haven't given them anything more prescriptive."

Everyone I spoke with agreed that since the work the writers were promoting was all completed before the strike began, most efforts to publicize it and increase its box-office and/or award appeal was totally kosher — as long as it wasn't on a struck company's lot. Several publicists make the point that first-time writers and nominees especially cannot afford to turn away the kind of exposure that award season brings.

"I encourage all of my clients to participate in smart and effective campaigns so long as they are in accordance with the current WGA strike rules," says I/D Public Relations publicist Bebe Lerner. "It is especially important for first-time writers to have the proper exposure, and the awards season provides a great opportunity to advance a ca-

reer."

The truth, however, is that no one really knows where the line should be drawn or how far one would need to go to cross it, because writers and writer-hyphenates have thus far been exceedingly cautious about provoking a backlash from the guild leadership.

But maybe it's the — pardon the expression — big-picture argument that really carries the day.

"No one expects the screenwriter to be one of the faces of a film when it's released, which is weird," writes Cody. "Maybe if the general population actually knew our names, this battle would be easier, eh?"

Adaptation, the Harwood way

If anyone could teach an aspiring screenwriter how to learn the craft, it should be an es-



ROBERT GAUTHIER *Los Angeles Times*
PRO: Screenwriter Ronald Harwood provides lessons.

teemed and rewarded veteran like Ronald Harwood. The 73-year-old British playwright and Oscar-winning screenwriter ("The Pianist") has spent the last four decades earning his reputation as the king of the adaptation by translating for the big screen literary works such as "One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich," "Cry, the Beloved Country," "The Dresser" (from his own play), "Love in the Time of Cholera" and his most recent marvel, "The Diving Bell and the Butterfly."

Now he's responsible for "Ronald Harwood's Adaptations: From Other Works Into Films," which is being billed as the only how-to book written by a working, successful, Oscar-winning screenwriter.

It's a misleading distinction. The book is actually a series of extensive question-and-answer sessions between Harwood and the book's editors, David Nicholas Wilkinson and Emlyn Price, who won Harwood's participation only after promising that he didn't have to write anything himself.

And then there's the sticky question of whether Harwood thinks screenwriting can actually be taught in such a fashion. "No," he says immediately, a brief silence then broken by an eruption of cascading laughter.

"I've just killed the book," he says with a verbal shrug. "I don't really. If you're the genuine arti-

cle, you just do it, and you find a way. Take that lovely girl, Diablo Colby [sic]. She just wrote 'Juno,' and it's a terrific screenplay."

True enough. In that sense, "Adaptations" should be read less as the latest screenwriting guide and more as a series of great audio commentaries from a master storyteller (it's available on Amazon's U.K. website and the editors are looking for an American publisher). Wilkinson and Price screened three of Harwood's films — "The Dresser," "Oliver Twist" and "Taking Sides" — while Harwood watched and described his process. After a few more days of questioning, they transcribed the sessions into the book (with light editing by Harwood, who excised some of the ruder comments with which he let fly).

Harwood says that when he started in the '60s, his only guide was Tennessee Williams' Oscar-nominated script for the 1956 film "Baby Doll," which was the rare published screenplay he could find at the time. In his own work since, he's learned firsthand how elusive that mythical script template is.

When he was trying to crack the screenplay for "Diving Bell," which has been nominated for Spirit and Golden Globe awards, Harwood paced in his Paris apartment for weeks without "a single glimmer of an idea." On the verge of returning the property to the producer, he was suddenly inspired to write the story explicitly from the point of view of the paralyzed Jean-Dominique Bauby, with the camera actually "blinking."

"It was a terrific moment," Harwood says. "There is no golden rule. These gurus who come about — and make a fortune, incidentally — teaching people how to write screenplays, pretend there's a structural rule that you can follow, that characters have certain arcs. They don't, you know. Each life is different, and each screenplay is different. Each one has its own world, its own existence."

Scriptland is a weekly feature on the work and professional lives of screenwriters. Please e-mail any tips or comments to fernandez_jay@hotmail.com.

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