

Hollywood writers seek bigger cut of DVD money in contract talks

By Gary Gentile
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

LOS ANGELES (AP) — Movie and television writers will seek a bigger cut of profits from the fast-growing DVD market when talks begin Monday on a new three-year contract.

Members of the Writers Guild of America also want studios to help cover rising health care costs.

Producers counter they cannot afford to pay writers more because production costs have increased and changing economics and viewing habits have made it tougher to recoup investments.

"It's not surprising to hear media moguls pleading poverty," the guild told mem-

bers in a recent negotiations update. "But don't be fooled."

The WGA contract covering 11,000 writers is set to expire on May 2. The union's last strike, in 1988, delayed the start of that year's fall TV season.

Both sides have offered little public comment about the negotiations or the possibility of a strike. Some industry sources have said that unscripted reality shows would make it easier to fill holes in the fall TV schedule in the event of a walkout.

The talks are shaping up as a sequel of sorts, with many of the same economic issues on the table that dominated the last round of talks in 2001.

Those negotiations were settled when writers dropped

demands for an increase in home video payments and won a share of video-on-demand revenue.

At that time, DVD sales were only beginning to become a major revenue source for studios. By 2003, however, sales of DVDs had soared to \$16 billion, with TV shows accounting for \$1.5 billion, according to industry figures.

Writers now get a tiny fraction of that revenue — only about \$1 for every \$300 in studio profits, the WGA said. The union wants to increase its share, which is based on a formula used since 1985 — the beginning of the VHS videotape boom.

Writers also want expanded participation in reality programming, a growing con-

cern as shows such as "Survivor" and "The Apprentice" become cornerstones of network schedules.

Producers concede they have reaped millions from home video sales and that DVDs in particular have become a major source of revenue.

But they argue that on the TV side, DVD revenue is merely replacing money that had come from international markets that have dried up, syndication deals and licensing fees that had been increased after shows became hits.

Writers Guild of America: <http://www.wga.org>
Alliance of Motion Picture and Television Producers: <http://www.amptp.org>

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Couple balances musical career and marriage as popularity takes off

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And unlike other singers, Kindred is really a family. The couple have two children, so they have to balance family, career and travel.

"It's amazing that we're still together," Aja said, "And that we still like each other."

The duo has been married for nearly six years. And they are learning as they go along, Aja said. "There is no one else in a situation like ours."

"We're two individuals with our own feelings and emotions that we want to share with

the world. Truth has been missing in R&B music. Everybody wants to be something they're not. And that's what we're trying hard not to do," Fatin said.

At one time, both Aja and Fatin were pursuing solo careers. But Hidden Beach recording star Jill Scott saw the group performing at Philadelphia's famed Black Lily and brought them to the attention of Hidden Beach president Steve McKeever, according to the group's website.

Fatin said the next Kindred project should be released next year.

A fish story

Noel's Gallery held a reception for Fernando Porras last Friday.

His exhibit "a fish story" will run through May 29.



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