



Fact Checking the AMPTP December 1, 2008

In the interests of providing facts in the face of AMPTP fiction, Screen Actors Guild has prepared the following:

AMPTP MYTH: “The mediation failed for one fundamental reason: SAG continued unrealistically to insist on a substantially better deal than all of the other major Hollywood Guilds and Unions have negotiated so far in 2008. In the end, it was clear that SAG was not serious about using the mediation process to make a deal. Instead, SAG appears to have manipulated the mediation process in an attempt to achieve precisely the result it has wanted all along: A strike by SAG members.”

SAG RESPONSE: *We were deadly serious about making this mediation process work. In fact, SAG requested the mediation. Our negotiators met in earnest with the mediator on several occasions and came to the table with an open mind. We do not want a strike. We want a fair contract. To say that the newly constituted SAG National Board voted by 97% to ask for federal mediation only to call a strike is absurd.*

AMPTP MYTH: “SAG has not justified why it deserves to be treated differently than the industry’s other Guilds and Unions – particularly at a time of extraordinary economic distress for both the country and the entertainment business. SAG refuses to deviate from its unrealistic position, even continuing to cling to its proposal to change the DVD residual formula.”

SAG RESPONSE: *Unfortunately, it’s more of the same from the AMPTP. SAG represents ACTORS—not writers, directors or crewmembers. The AMPTP boasted that it completed the deal with IATSE two weeks ago and, according to the AMPTP statement that followed, made “applicable modifications for the particular needs of IATSE members.” Somehow that logic has not been applied to Screen Actors Guild’s negotiations. We are only asking for fair and reasonable modifications for the needs of actors.*

AMPTP MYTH: “AMPTP has already negotiated six major labor agreements in 2008 alone, including the pact just concluded with IATSE. We are prepared to conclude an agreement with SAG, but we simply do not see any justification for SAG receiving more than we have offered - a deal that is every bit as good as the ones the industry’s other Guilds and Unions have negotiated in far better economic times.”

SAG RESPONSE: *The AMPTP made deals with four unions before SAG. So actors are supposed to simply take what the others got? Why show up at all? We represent more than 120,000 actors across the country who deserve the minor modifications we are seeking to the “pattern,” new media formula agreed to by our sister unions. SAG members work on the vast majority of television programs under this contract, and we cover all motion pictures. If actors can’t make a living in this business, who is going to perform the roles writers write and directors direct? Simply stated, our careers are at risk.*

AMPTP MYTH: “AMPTP’s offer to SAG members is fair and strong – and at least until now, we have kept the offer on the table despite the precipitous economic decline of the last several months. Whether we will be able to continue to do so in the face of the economic downturn remains to be seen. We are now prepared to continue explaining the merits of our offer in every way that we possibly can. The more SAG members understand about the fairness and strength of our offer, especially during a time of historic economic distress, the less likely they will be to authorize a strike.”

SAG RESPONSE: *All Americans are suffering from this economic hardship, but it’s hardly the time for our employers to drive us out of this business. They need us to make their products, and to stay in the game we need fair wages. We are professionals. We do our jobs and take care of our families just like everyone else.*

AMPTP MYTH: “We will also continue to place the burden squarely on SAG to explain why it deserves better deals than the other entertainment Guilds received earlier this year – particularly in light of the fact that the earlier deals were negotiated during better economic times, and SAG is attempting to reach a deal now during a period of tremendous economic upheaval.”

SAG RESPONSE: *Actors rely on residuals to survive. The AMPTP wants to run made-for new media programs over and over, for FREE. When’s the last time you worked for free? And they want to make new media productions non-union WITH SAG MEMBERS! That may be okay for writers and directors who don’t do the low budget jobs, but not for actors. Actors do all kinds of acting work to establish their careers. Members of SAG Branches across the country are already competing for jobs with their non-union counterparts. Enough is enough.*

AMPTP MYTH: “Finally, and most importantly, SAG should understand that a strike would be economically devastating to the entire industry, including its own members, as well as to the overall economy. The unreal timing of the call by SAG for a strike in the midst of one of the worst economic crisis the global system has ever faced, demonstrates once and for all that SAG is completely out of touch with reality. A SAG strike in this financial meltdown would be like pouring gasoline on a fire, and it is astonishing that SAG would call for a strike vote when the rest of the country is reeling from an unprecedented financial crisis.”

SAG RESPONSE: *SAG members have the most to lose if we don’t address these critical contract issues now. Management can prevent uncertainty and end the threat of a work stoppage by taking a hard look at what actors need to stay available to perform in television shows, motion pictures and new media projects. Play fair and stop blaming the workers. We help you make money.*

AMPTP MYTH: “Make no mistake about this: If SAG members authorize a strike, then a strike is all but guaranteed because SAG has shown no willingness to compromise on its unrealistic demands. Simply put, a vote to authorize a strike will lead inexorably to a strike, and a strike would cost SAG members far more than they can ever expect to gain.”

SAG RESPONSE: *Giving away residuals for made-for new media programs and giving away jobs to non-union performers is losing. Losing our careers, our livelihoods and our benefits is not an option. We have to think of the big picture, not corporate America’s economic problems.*

AMPTP MYTH: “In short, over the coming days and weeks, AMPTP will continue vigorously to communicate our fundamental position: The six other labor agreements Producers have made this year couple significant economic gains with groundbreaking new media rights. The new media template simply cannot be abandoned at this point because it will undermine our industry’s ability to compete in this new market. The bottom line is clear: No strike authorization – and no strike – can change these basic facts.”

SAG RESPONSE: *SAG and AMPTP companies rely on each other. We need them for our jobs, and they need us to make their products. It’s a two-way street, and we are asking for what is fair.*