

## ICM

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tion shutting down, have been hit particularly hard by the strike.

The writers walkout already has led to a temporary 20% salary reduction among the top echelon of agents and executives at UTA as well as the firing of about 10 assistants at Innovative Artists.

With no end in sight to the strike, agencies had been expected to begin suspending or laying off agents in January under the *force majeure* — or “act of God” — provision triggered in extraor-

dinary circumstances like a major strike.

Several smaller agencies and management companies, which rely heavily on booking guest stars on series, might go under in the next month or so, observers say.

Many smaller talent representation players already have laid off assistants and low-level agents who are now searching for new jobs, but with the entertainment market so tight because of the strike, they might have to look elsewhere.

“There are some good people leaving the business for good,” one manager said. ■

## CBS

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added. The proposed pact would take effect immediately upon ratification and run through April 1, 2010. It would cover WGA newswriters, editors, desk and production assistants, graphic artists and researchers and CBS’ TV and radio operations in Los Angeles, New York, Chicago and Washington.

Members will vote Jan. 23-24 on the tentative agreement, which also must be approved by the WGAE Council and the WGA West board. “We are gratified that a tentative

agreement has been reached so that CBS and its valued WGA news employees can put this chapter behind us,” CBS said. “Our focus throughout the process has been on reaching a fair agreement, and we think this contract is good for both sides.”

The tentative agreement with CBS follows last month’s WGA ratification of a new contract with ABC covering 250 newswriters and others in New York and Washington. The ABC newswriters, who also had worked more than two years under an expired contract, also won 3.5% raises and a \$3,700 bonus. ■

## Shows

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gets what little it can even from a reduced Globes, saying that there would be live cut-ins with Ryan Seacrest outside the news conference when winners are announced and a 7 p.m. report the next day with “an overview of the Golden Globe results, in-depth analysis and winner reactions.”

But the network also seemed to acknowledge the lower interest,

scheduling “Snoop Dogg’s Father Hood” during the news conference and “The Girl Next Door” following it at 10 p.m.

Instead, it touted in a statement that “E! looks forward to bringing viewers its unparalleled access inside Hollywood’s biggest award shows in the future, including the upcoming SAG Awards on Sunday, Jan. 27.”

*Nellie Andreeva and Kimberly Nordyke in Los Angeles contributed to this report.*

# Writers turn to child’s play

## Kid lit Worthwhile gig for some

By Steven Zeitchik



Kurtz

Sacks

NEW YORK — With the strike putting the brakes on film and TV writing, a group of Hollywood scribes has found an unusual mode of creative expression: children’s books.

Writers with credits ranging from “The Simpsons” to “Shrek 2” to “That’s So Raven” are picking up their pens to write fictional stories — only instead of sitting in meetings coming up with punch lines, they’re at home dreaming up frogs with big appetites and boys who fight with their sisters.

“It’s kind of a nice way to do something creative at a time when we’re having a hard time doing our bread-and-butter work,” said David N. Weiss, a “Shrek 2” and “Rugrats” writer and WGA vp who recently turned in a first draft of “Carl the Frog,” about a reptile who tries to eat other frogs.

Then there’s former “Raven” exec producer Dava Savel and former “Simpsons” and “Malcolm in the Middle” writer David Sacks. Savel is writing about a boy who creates his own town because his sister is hogging space. Sacks is finding time between his current executive producer duties on Comedy Central’s “The Root of All Evil” to pen “Vigfus,” a parable about Vikings who end up in modern-day New York and find the city too gentle.

“It has been a great outlet during the strike,” said Sacks, who with his writing partner Brian Ross recently turned in a second draft.

The titles are part of Worthwhile Books, a new imprint at the telco-cum-entertainment company IDT/IDW. Although the unit was conceived and a number of the deals were signed ahead of the strike, Worthwhile is benefiting from the added time writers suddenly find they have on their hands — when they’re not picketing, of course.

“We’re a small publishing house, so we’re not a struck company, and these writers can

write as much as they want,” said Robert Kurtz, vp and creative director of Worthwhile Books and a veteran of shows including “Boy Meets World.”

David Steinberg, a producer on “Meet the Robinsons,” also has been signed up by Worthwhile. Kurtz also is penning his own title for the imprint. The division plans on five to 10 books in its first year.

IDT in the summer bought IDW, publisher of the source material for Hollywood projects including “30 Days of Night.”

The writers are realistic about the financial rewards of a children’s book, which in the past decade has come into vogue for celebrities ranging from Madonna to Jay Leno.

“I don’t think anyone thinks they’re going to make a lot of money on it,” Weiss said. “But creatively and emotionally, the chance to work on something that’s personal without the presence of a massive corporation is special right now.” Worthwhile does say it hopes to develop the projects into potential film and television vehicles.

While the books — mostly aimed at the preschool crowd — skew younger than what most writers are used to, the scribes say the form complements film and television work.

“I’m finding that in good children’s books, the text isn’t just describing the picture but the two are working together to advance the storytelling,” Sacks said.

And, sometimes, there’s also a chance to make a political point.

“I’m writing a book with the lesson how it’s not good to eat your friends,” Weiss said. “This could be a good book for the AMPTP.”

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