

## Stars (*with No Words*) Wars Episode II: The Writer's Strike Back Headline Humor -By Ron McGehee

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away....., a small group of individuals formed an alliance. A guild, if you will, of wordsmiths who gave bright, witty, funny lines to beautiful people with dark tans in the middle of winter. With these magical phrases, the "Beautiful ones" would present stories, tales of humor, love and adventure, in sitcoms, soap operas, and Knight Rider. Many were harmed by this war, but none worse than, "Moonlighting." We all thought, the love of Dave and Maddie could conquer all.

That was back in the 80's. The strike lasted 22 weeks and cost the studios an estimated \$500,000,000, 10% of viewers, and never really gave Manimal the chance it needed to find an audience. The strike was over residuals of video sales. The studios made great money off of video sales. It even allowed them to create a straight to video market, which in turn led to Stephen Baldwin to care for his family until he met the Lord.

Fast-forward to today and we have a similar war waged today over DVD sales and the ever mysterious "internet download sales." Understandably, it is a hard thing to track since we really don't have enough info to make a projected forecast. But we still need to figure it out.

Writer's need to be paid for their work. They need to get their fair share. A lot of people think writer's write and then their stuff is on TV or the big screen. And then the money just rolls in. Actually, first to get to write something that someone purchases is extremely difficult, and then to get it to be made and then actually shown or aired starts to get into the astronomical. I have friends that have sold many things that have never aired. So they will never make any money on residuals. When a writer is able to make residuals on something it is of great import, because many times there is a long time between gigs, even without a strike.

As a writer myself I know that in the beginning you write for free in the hopes that someone will buy your stuff. Even when it doesn't happen you still write. Then when something sells it is a glorious day. But when you factor in the debt you have obtained to focus on your writing career while you take a more menial job and the living at sub-standard conditions existing on ketchup packs and non-dairy creamer while crashing on a couch at the 24-hour Super K-Mart Store, you need to sell a few more to break even.

I couldn't tell you what the exact resolution should be, but I do know that paying fairly for good quality writing is of import to us all. Unless, of course, you want "I Love New York" to be getting all the Emmys or Steven Seagal to be writing his own dialogue. (we see how writing his own marriage vows to Kelly LeBrock worked out.)

Ron McGehee has made a number of guest television appearances including NBC's "Last Comic Standing 2", Comedy Central, ABC Family, starred in and co produced the reality show ILoveKerri.tv and has written for *The Late, Late Show with Craig Kilborn*, *The Carson Daily Show*, and *Jimmy Kimmel*. Ron tours extensively performing stand up, speaking at churches and colleges bringing his life lessons and hilarious multi cultural humor to audiences nationally. He is also busy as a screenwriter and contributing writer in many magazines.

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