

Sound departments turned down the volume but increased otherworldly sounds. **Oscar Watch: Crafts III** begins after page 18.

Darfur protest
Steven Spielberg opts out of the Beijing Olympics. See page 2.



Iran film confab endures
Political strife can't derail Tehran's Fajr festival. See page 29.



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Signing off



Murray



Swinton

Old friends to reunite in 'Control'

More Berlin film fest news and reviews on pages 6, 14, 16.

By Charles Masters

BERLIN — Jim Jarmusch has enlisted past collaborators Bill Murray and Tilda Swinton along with Gael Garcia Bernal for his upcoming thriller "The Limits of Control."



Jarmusch

The Spain-set road movie, which will be distributed in the U.S. by Focus Features, stars Isaach De Bankole. Veteran French actor Jean-Francois Stevenin also has come on board.

The movie centers on a mysterious loner as he attempts to complete a criminal job. The film, scheduled to shoot this month on Jar- See "CONTROL" on page 41



WGA East president Michael Winship, left, meets the media in New York on Tuesday; Greg Fields and son Caelan cast their ballot at the WGA Theater in Beverly Hills. Writers voted whether to bring an end to the 100-day walkout.

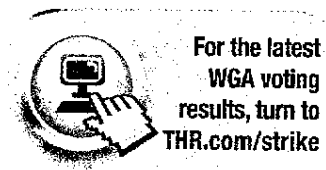
WGA members vote on ending strike

By Gail Schiller

On a cold and snowy day, members of the WGA East trickled into the Crowne Plaza Hotel late Tuesday to vote on whether to end the more than three-month writers strike and head back to work today.

At a brief news conference in the hotel entrance before balloting and an informational meeting with guild members, WGAE president Michael Winship said he was "reasonably confident" members would vote to lift the restraining order that put the strike into effect Nov. 5. He was personally in favor of a return to work, he added.

"I don't think it's a pro forma



For the latest WGA voting results, turn to THR.com/strike

vote," Winship said on the 100th day of the walkout. "I think it's a very informed vote. They've had a few days to ponder the contract and all the advances that we've made in this contract, and they've had 14 weeks on the picket line. On the basis of all that information and all that hard-won experience on the streets, they'll make a very, very rational, sound decision as to whether to lift the restraining order."

Similar voting took place among

WGA West members in Beverly Hills, and results from all of the voting weren't expected to be announced until 9 p.m. PST.

Winship called the tentative deal with the Alliance of Motion Picture & Television Producers — which must be ratified in a separate membership vote, to be conducted through Feb. 25 by mail and at meetings on both coasts — a "historic agreement."

Said the WGAE president: "Jurisdiction over the Internet and new media will allow writers to go into the 21st century knowing that their work will be covered in those areas. We will be receiving a percentage of distributors' gross — which is very

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WGA

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real money, as opposed to what people refer to as creative or Hollywood accounting, where you're never quite sure where the money is going or coming from."

More than a dozen WGAE members interviewed said they voted in favor of ending the strike. Some seemed less enthusiastic than Winship about the pact, but all said they wanted to get back to work.

"I think we got our foot in the door on the major issues here," said Peter Blauner, a writer on "Law & Order: Criminal Intent." "It's not everything that we wanted, but I think it's a good beginning."

Adam Tobin, who created the new teen sitcom "About A Girl" on the N cable network, said he was concerned about the 17- and 24-day compensation-free windows for different categories of Internet programming.

"I think people are satisfied with the contract; I don't know that they're happy," he said.

Brian Koppelman, a screenwriter whose credits include "Ocean's Thirteen," "Rounders" and "Runaway Jury," described the contract as a "big jump forward" and a "big improvement" on the WGA's previous deal with the AMPTP.

"Let's end this thing and get back to work," Koppelman said. "I can't wait to get back to work."

And Jose Arroyo, a writer for "Late Night With Conan O'Brien," said that while the gains in Internet revenue won't make up for his lost income during the past three months, the strike was worth it.

"It hurts and it was painful, but it's not the worst thing in the world," Arroyo said. "I think the time is right and the deal is right to go back. This strike has shown that we're capable of walking out and waiting to get what we consider fair. I think the membership has been energized in that way."

On the West Coast, where about three-fourths of the contract's 10,500 affected scribes reside, voting was brisk at the WGA Theatre in Beverly Hills. Legions of camera crews who descended upon the scene set up on the periphery of the area, with access to the actual voting site



Writers Sean O'Byrne, left, Steve Rivele talk strategy in Beverly Hills.

limited to a pool photographer and cameraman.

Meanwhile, a feel-good vibe continued to ripple through Hollywood in anticipation of a return to work after months of inactivity on TV sets and significant disruption in filmmaking.

CBS Corp. topper Leslie Moonves confided to sorting through "so many emotions" as the protracted labor strife finally wound to a halt.

"But right now, there is a great sense of relief and a feeling that we're putting the community back together," he said. "And that's a great feeling."

Moonves said the strike was disruptive for his company but not overly damaging.

"Frankly, revenue was not down a lot, and costs were down a lot," he said. "So financially, there wasn't a lot of pain inflicted on CBS Corp. But I believe in this business, and this business is good when we're in full-scale production."

Today will represent a giant step in just that direction.

Actual productions, with actors on the set, won't get under way for another couple of weeks. But starting immediately, producers of shows on all the broadcast networks will have scribes back sharpening their pencils and starting to scratch out scripts on new episodes.

The new episodes then will go before the cameras during the next month. Sitcoms, on average, will need less prep time than dramas.

Carl DiOrio in Los Angeles contributed to this report.

Network neutrality issue is gaining traction at FCC

By Brooks Boliek

WASHINGTON — The FCC showed Tuesday that it is getting serious about the thorny problem of network neutrality, scheduling a public hearing on the issue this month in Boston.

The hearing comes in response to two petitions filed at the commission by the public-interest group SavetheInternet.com Coalition and Vuze Inc. — a company that distributes video using BitTorrent file-sharing technology. The "network management" petitions neatly brack the decisions the commission will have to make about just what network neutrality means and how the government applies the principle.

"We are in a unique moment in history when the government will decide whether we have a closed Internet controlled by a small handful of giant corporations or an open Internet controlled by the people who use it," said Free Press campaign director Timothy Karr.

FCC chairman Kevin Martin contends that a group of network neutrality "principles" already adopted by the agency give the commission give it enough regulatory.

But some of his bosses in Congress don't see it that way.

Rep. Ed Markey, D-Mass., chairman of the House telecommunications subcommittee, introduced legislation Tuesday that enconces the network neutrality principle into law. While Markey's move is a crucial one, it is unrealistic to think legislation that makes that big a change will get through this Congress.

Big network companies like Comcast, Verizon, AT&T and Time Warner Cable contend that a firm regulatory hand is unnecessary and that they have the right to manage the networks they built.

The pressure comes amid revelations that the big network companies may have been favoring one kind of traffic over another or blocking content.

In an investigation last year, the Associated Press found that Comcast in some cases hindered file-sharing by subscribers who used BitTorrent. The findings, first reported Oct. 19, confirmed claims by users who also noticed interference with other file-sharing applications.

Comcast and the other network companies contend that they do not block file-sharing, but even Comcast acknowledged milder interventions to improve the flow of traffic for the majority of its customers.

'Control'

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musch's own script, is lensing in Madrid, Seville and Almeria.

A PointBlank Films production, "Control" is produced by Gretchen McGowan and Stacey Smith and executive produced by Jon Kilik.

The film will include a series of star cameos. Javier Bardem and Roman Polanski had been rumored to make appearances but are understood not to be involved. Chinese star Zhang Ziyi ("Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon") also has been mentioned for a role.

"Control" marks the third

teaming between Jarmusch and Murray after "Coffee and Cigarettes" and "Broken Flowers," a commercial hit for the duo by art house standards. Swinton, who stars in the Berlinale competition title "Julia" from Erick Zonca, also appeared in "Broken Flowers" along with Sharon Stone, Jessica Lange, Chloe Sevigny and Julie Delpy.

Bankole is a Jarmusch regular, having appeared in "Night on Earth," "Ghost Dog: The Way of the Samurai" and "Coffee and Cigarettes."

Focus Features International, which is selling the film at the European Film Market, did not return calls at press time. ■