#DisneyMustPay Uncovers Additional Unpaid Writers

Joint Task Force Announced by Major Professional Writers Associations

Contract issues with Disney-owned/controlled companies continue to affect multiple authors across different writer organizations. To advocate for these writers, Science Fiction and Fantasy Writers of America (SFWA) formed the #DisneyMustPay Joint Task Force with the Author's Guild, Horror Writers Association, National Writers Union, Novelists, Inc., Romance Writers of America, and Sisters in Crime to identify and guide authors who might be owed money. The task force includes members such as Neil Gaiman, Tess Gerritsen, Mary Robinette Kowal, and Chuck Wendig. The committee has identified the key areas to be addressed. Disney needs to:

1. Honor contracts now held by Disney and its subsidiaries.
2. Provide royalty payments and statements to all affected authors.
3. Update their licensing page with an FAQ for writers about how to handle missing royalties.
4. Create a clear, easy-to-find contact person or point for affected authors.
5. Cooperate with author organizations that are providing support to authors and agents.

The #DisneyMustPay Task Force presented these steps to Disney and offered them an opportunity to include a statement in this email to our members. Disney declined.

Authors may be missing royalty statements or checks across a wide range of properties in prose, comics, or graphic novels. This list is incomplete and based on properties for which we have verified reports of missing statements and royalties:

- LucasFilm (*Star Wars, Indiana Jones*, etc.)
- Boom! Comics (Licensed comics including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, etc.)
- Dark Horse Comics (Licensed comics including *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, etc.)
- 20th Century Fox (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Alien*, etc.)
- MGM (*Stargate*)
- Marvel WorldWide (*SpiderMan, Predator*)
- Disney Worldwide Publishing (*Buffy, Angel*)

“Writers must be paid or given missing royalty statements; these contracts must be honored,” said Mary Robinette Kowal, President, SFWA. “We urge all authors to review their statements to make certain they are in order.”

To get help in seeking resolution, an affected author does not need an agent or membership in any author organization. Writers who are missing royalties or royalty statements may fill out this form hosted by SFWA. Anonymity is guaranteed.

Last year, Alan Dean Foster came to SFWA’s Grievance Committee because he had written novels and was not being paid the royalties that were specified in his contract. During the investigation, SFWA discovered that
Disney was now the rights holder and contacted them. The initial contact refused to pay.

Disney’s argument was that they had purchased the rights but not the obligations of the contract. SFWA was forced to take the matter public to get a resolution. SFWA suspected that other authors would be similarly affected.

SFWA is pleased to report that the matter of missing royalties for Mr. Foster’s novelizations has been resolved. Yet, about a dozen additional authors contacted SFWA with a request for assistance, including the authors of *Empire Strikes Back*, *Return of the Jedi*, *Indiana Jones*, and multiple other properties. SFWA has provided Disney with the names of authors who are similarly missing royalty statements and payments going back years.

Disney is being reactive rather than proactively working with us to address the significant issue we have brought to their attention.

It should be noted that while in talks for Mr. Foster’s *Alien* novels, Disney was told that he was also missing statements and royalties for his *Star Wars* novelizations. They would not begin the process nor resume royalty statements until Mr. Foster contacted them with a formal claim.

“SFWA wishes to create a cooperative relationship with Disney, but the corporation flatly refuses to work with us,” said Kowal. “They say they are committed to paying the authors, but their actions make it clear that Disney is placing the onus to be paid on the authors, while at the same time attempting to isolate the authors from receiving counsel from their professional author organization.”

During the initial #DisneyMustPay campaign, SFWA proposed a hypothetical situation based on Disney’s position that they had purchased the rights but not the obligations to Mr. Foster’s work. In this scenario, Company A might sell a property to their sister Company B to get out of paying royalties.
This situation is no longer hypothetical. Fox had licensed the comics rights to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to Dark Horse. After Disney purchased Fox, they withdrew those rights from Dark Horse and granted them to Boom! Comics. When one *Buffy* author contacted Boom! about missing royalties, they were told that “royalties don’t transfer.”

Disney is one of the owners of Boom! Comics.

Since Disney has declined to cooperate with the task force in identifying affected authors, the [#DisneyMustPay Joint Task Force](https://writersmustbepaid.org) needs help to contact everyone who might be affected. The joint task members need writers, readers, and fans to alert authors who may be affected.

Other ways to support this effort:

- Do not boycott, as this will disproportionately affect those authors who *are* being paid.
- Use #DisneyMustPay on social media. Help is needed to bring the task force’s five action items to the attention of Disney’s decision-makers.
- Visit [WritersMustBePaid.org](https://writersmustbepaid.org), a new website set up by our new task force, and share it.
- Do purchase the works of affected authors for which they are receiving royalties.

The [#DisneyMustPay Joint Task Force](https://writersmustbepaid.org) is in making sure writers’ working conditions are fair and safe, but individual negotiations are, rightly, between the authors, their agents, and the rights holder. Hence, the Disney Task Force is looking at structural and systemic concerns.

One of those concerns is identifying the authors whose royalty payments may have been missed as a result of acquisition integration. Working with the task force would have streamlined identifying those authors for Disney -- since we have current contact information for our various members -- and Disney knows when acquisitions happened and for which properties.
Without that cooperation, the #DisneyMustPay Joint Task Force is broadcasting, widely and loudly, to make sure that everyone who might be affected hears the message.

Additional updates and information will be available at www.writersmustbepaid.org.

-30-