

Hollywood celebrates strike end as actors get back to work

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Online Desk: Hollywood celebrated Thursday after actors ended a crippling months-long strike, kicking off a race to get the cameras rolling and salvage next year's movies and television shows.

The Screen Actors Guild (SAG-AFTRA) called off its 118-day strike after reaching a tentative agreement with studios for a new contract including higher pay and protections against the use of artificial intelligence, AFP reports.

While the deal needs to be ratified, and details of the contract have not yet been released, actors can return to making — and promoting — films right away.

“Effective immediately, all SAG-AFTRA members should fulfill their contractual obligations and return to work,” the union said in a message to members Thursday.

The deal comes just in time for studios to finish movies still penciled in for next summer's blockbuster season, and some television shows can even be completed in time for spring.

“WE DID IT!!!” wrote actor Noah Schnapp, posting on Instagram an image of a screenplay for the final season of hit Netflix show “Stranger Things,” which had to delay filming earlier this year.

“Oh, We're very back,” wrote Quinta Brunson, star of “Abbott Elementary,” on Instagram.

While some movies, including Tom Cruise's next “Mission Impossible,” had already abandoned release dates next summer, the timing of the deal will raise hopes that other big titles can be delivered on schedule.

Filming on Ryan Reynolds' and Hugh Jackman's eagerly awaited superhero sequel “Deadpool 3,” which was forced to pause for four months, will resume before Thanksgiving (November 23), Variety reported.

“There will be a summer movie season next year — which was in great peril if this deal hadn't gotten done before the holidays,” said entertainment lawyer Jonathan Handel.

“We would have seen a complete exodus.”

And the timing of the agreement will also reinvigorate Hollywood's imminent awards season.

The Oscars are set to be held in March, and nominations for precursor events such as the Golden Globes and Critics Choice Awards will be announced as soon as next month.

Already by Thursday morning, invitations to star-studded Los Angeles premieres were being dispatched to awards group voters, including a gala featuring Natalie Portman and Julianne Moore for Netflix movie “May December” at the Academy Museum of Motion Pictures.

Upcoming world premieres for eagerly awaited movies such as “Wonka,” starring Timothée Chalamet, and “Aquaman and the Lost Kingdom,” starring Jason Momoa, will be able to wheel out their A-list talent, to boost publicity.

— ‘Relief and happiness ‘ —

“We can really celebrate with this contract,” SAG-AFTRA President Fran Drescher told CNN on Thursday, adding that the new contract “broke so much ground.”

“How I feel is great relief and happiness that we stood firm, we held our ground, and we got a historic and seminal contract at a point in history where it was necessary,” she said.

In addition to pay rises, and bonuses for starring in hit shows, the contract ensures for the first time that studios need to “ask for permission for everything” when using artificial intelligence to digitally insert famous actors into movies, said Drescher.

Details of the new contract will be shared following a SAG-AFTRA board meeting Friday.

The deal was hailed by politicians including US President Joe Biden, who said in a statement: “Collective bargaining works.”

“There is power in a union. Congratulations @sagaftra!” wrote Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, a prominent progressive Democrat.

Outside Los Angeles studios, the picket lines that have become a daily feature since May were gone, although a small group of SAG-AFTRA members gathered outside Warner Bros. to celebrate.

“I feel relieved... we had been tensing up, not knowing how long this fight was gonna go, and now we can release that tension,” actor D.W. McCann told AFP.

“Hopefully the contract is what we need it to be. And it can just be behind us and we can get back to work.”