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Composers Looking to Unionize

Hollywood composers are looking for a little group harmony at the bargaining table.

About 450 television and film composers and lyricists met with representatives of the Teamsters Monday night to discuss unionization and collective bargaining.

According to composer Alan Elliott, who helped organize the Burbank event and spoke publicly at the proceedings, more than 200 attendees signed cards expressing their wish to unionize on the spot.

With the entire Hollywood composers community estimated to number around 500, Elliott told *TheWrap*, that's close to the 50 percent threshold required to join the Teamsters.

For his part, Elliott presented stark figures noting that while wages for Writers Guild of America members working on TV shows have grown significantly since 1979, compensation for composers working on shows is an astounding 14 percent of what it was in those days, adjusted for inflation.

"In plain, for every \$100,000 you might be making were we to have had a union for the past 30 years, we are making \$14,000," Elliott noted.

Over that same period, TV producers are demanding twice as much music, he added -- an average of 30 minutes per hourlong show compared to 15 minutes in 1970. (Writers data was supplied by the WGA, but Elliott did not source his data for composers.)

Composers have not enjoyed a collective bargaining arrangement with the studios or producers since 1970.

"We now have no health benefits, no minimum wage and no established working conditions," Elliott said. "We're just trying to get some human dignity here."

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