

## WGA News

### WGA Announces Six Credit Corrections for Films Written by Blacklisted Writers



Warren Beatty with former Guild Presidents George Kirgo and Del Reisman at a press conference to announce the credit corrections.

LOS ANGELES - On March 10, Oscar-nominated screenwriter Warren Beatty (Bulworth) joined former WGA Presidents George Kirgo and Del Reisman for a press conference to announce changes in the credits of six films written by blacklisted writers. Beatty stated he was honored to be able to take part in the announcement, to help bring attention to the Guild's ongoing effort to ensure blacklisted writers get credit where it's due. Also at the press conference was one of the writers affected by the credit revisions-- Norma Barzman (screenwriter of *Luxury Girls*). Details of the announcement follow:

The Board of Directors of the Writers Guild of America, west, has unanimously voted to correct the writing credits of seven blacklisted writers. The corrections were approved during a March 1<sup>st</sup> Board meeting and will officially change the credits for six films released between 1948 and 1961. These changes are part of a continuing effort on the part of the guild to determine true authorship.

The guild's Blacklist Credits Committee recommended the changes after conducting an investigation using written material, correspondence and first-person statements. The committee includes former guild Presidents George Kirgo and Del Reisman (the late Paul Jarrico, himself a blacklisted writer, had been a member); members of the guild staff, researcher Jeff Blitz and the guild's Director of Credits, Cathy Reed.



Warren Beatty with blacklisted writer [Norma Barzman](#)

"It's a shame that American history makes these credit corrections necessary," said Daniel Petrie, Jr., President, WGAw. "but the guild is proud to ensure the public recognition these writers and their work deserve."

**The writing credits for the films of that era either omitted a blacklist writer's name or used a pseudonym or front.**

#### PSEUDONYMS and FRONTS

The following films involve correcting writing credits where evidence indicates that a blacklisted writer received credit through the use of a "front" or a pseudonym. In keeping with the Committee's established guidelines, such changes are recommended when there is sufficient information to identify a writer with a pseudonym and confirm that the writer used the pseudonym because of the blacklist. Since there was no

official end to the blacklist, some blacklisted writers continued to use a pseudonym in the 1960s and '70s.

On the films where someone acted as a front for another writer, the Committee relied on information from individuals with first-hand knowledge and other documentation to support its recommendations. The corrected credit is shown in boldface.

1. *Luxury Girls*, United Artists, 1953

(Original credits: "Written by Ennio Flaiano")

Corrected credits to read:

"Written by **Norma Barzman**"

Correspondence including a letter from the film's director, Bernie Vorhaus, confirms that Flaiano worked as a front for Barzman.

2. *The Magnificent Rebel* (aka Schicksals-Sinfonie), Walt Disney, 1960

(Original credits: "Written by Joanne Court")

Corrected credits to read:

"Written by **Joan Scott**"

Guild records clearly indicate that Joanne Court was a pseudonym for Joan Scott.

3. *The Two-Headed Spy*, Columbia, 1959

(Original credits: "Screenplay by James O'Donnell. Based on a short story by J. Alvin Kugelmass.")

Corrected credits to read:

"Screenplay by **Michael Wilson & Alfred Levitt**. Based on a short story by J. Alvin Kugelmass."

Records in the producer's files and the Michael Wilson archives clearly indicate that James O'Donnell was a pseudonym for Michael Wilson. Further records indicate that Levitt was secretly employed to collaborate with Wilson on this film.

## A. Omissions

The titles listed below involve films where writers did not receive any writing credit because of the blacklist.

1. *El Cid*, Allied Artists, 1961

(Original credits: "Screenplay by Philip Yordan and Frederic M. Frank. Story by Frederic

M. Frank.")

Corrected credits to read:

"Screenplay by Philip Yordan and Frederic M. Frank and **Ben Barzman**. Story by Frederic M. Frank."

Extensive research indicates Barzman as a major writer of the screenplay and that he would have received credit but for his blacklisting. Sources include cast and crew of film including Sophia Loren and Charlton Heston.

2. *The Prisoner of Zenda*, MGM, 1952

(Original credits: "Screenplay by John L. Balderston and Noel Langley. Adaptation by Wells Root from the Novel by Anthony Hope and the dramatization by Edward Rose.")

Corrected credits to read:

"Screenplay by John L. Balderston and Noel Langley. Adaptation by Wells Root from the Novel by Anthony Hope and the dramatization by Edward Rose. Additional dialogue by **Donald Ogden Stewart**."

Our research shows that this is a remake of the 1938 film. All other credited writers of the '38 film received credit on the remake except Stewart. This is identical to *An Affair to Remember*, on which Stewart was omitted from the '50s version because of the blacklist.

3. *Ruthless*, Eagle Lyon/Arthur S. Lyon, 1948

(Original credits: "Screenplay by S.K. Lauren and Gordon Kahn. Based on the novel *Prelude to Night* by Dayton Stoddart.")

Corrected credits to read:

"Screenplay by **Alvah Bessie** and S.K. Lauren and Gordon Kahn. Based on the novel *Prelude to Night* by Dayton Stoddart."

Research including published interview with director Edgar Ulmer and documents in the Bessie archives indicate that Bessie would have received credit but for the blacklist. This was also confirmed by Kahn's son, Tony Kahn.

In the 1940s and '50s, individual writers, directors, actors, producers, agents and other filmmakers were called before the House Committee on Un-American Activities (HUAC) to testify about whether or not they were Communists and to "name" other suspected Communists. Men and women found themselves on the Hollywood Blacklist (an unofficial collection of hundreds of names) because they refused to discuss their political beliefs, refused to name others, were suspected as Communists or had been named by informers. Because of the unchecked zealotry of HUAC, the list also managed to include non-Communist liberals and even victims of mistaken identity. The Hollywood Blacklist destroyed the careers and lives of numerous Americans — not only artists but also those in government, in academia and unions. Although some of the many writers who were blacklisted were able to continue to work in some

fashion using "fronts" or pseudonyms, many writers were unable to find work within their profession. Even those who did find work on the black market still struggled to support themselves and their families. Many writers left the country to shield their families as much as possible from the effects of the blacklist.

The Writers Guild began correcting writing credits in 1986. To date the guild has officially corrected the writing credits on 82 films and will continue its work to correct credits of that era. A full list of all corrected credits to date is available upon request or click [here](#) to see the list on the WGA website.