

My name is David M. Singer, and I am about to burn my bridges before I get to them.

SAG (Screen Actor's Guild, a union) has failed.

With 80% of their 100,000 members out of work most of the time, and with "Most of [their] members ... not making the \$13,000 a year they need to qualify for health insurance" I'd say, categorically, failing worse than a box-office mega-flop.

OK, I've lit the match. Now I'm going to torch the first bridge:

SAG is just one more in a long line of hands scooping out the budgetted investment dollars before the bulk of the actors get paid. The facts are that a lot of dollars are collected at theater ticket booths. Where does it go? The theaters. The distributors. The production houses. The advertising companies. The lawyers. The agents. The studios (shooting fees). The big-named stars. The film manufactures. The post-production houses. SAG. Only 20 movies out of the 700 made by Hollywood each year have enough money left over to pay the investors. The remains, if any, go to the line actors.

Stunning! Less than 3% of all Hollywood movies make a profit. That's like a baseball player batting .030, a basketball player sinking one shot a year, everybody in the same high school flunking out at the same time. It's the same as a sales person making 3% of her annual quota, an auto dealer selling 3 cars off the lot from New Years 2004 to New Years 2005, or your TV getting nothing but snow for 363 days a year.

That's how badly made Hollywood movies are. In desperation, Hollywood has tried to trick the paying public into parting with their money by competing for the Big Name Stars in a wishful hope that the bad story will be ignored in favor of seeing the Big Name Star on the screen. In the business, it is known as "The Tent Pole", meaning a stupid business strategy of finding just one good movie that will prop up the tent to shelter the barely-surviving production house from the storm of 97% red ink losses. A few stars (estimate: under 50 total) are cashing in big time. Everybody else in that system is left with crumbs.

Or worse, holding an empty bag. Hollywood has so ruined the movie-making business that the SEC insists that financial investors be told **THEY WILL LOSE ALL THEIR MONEY**. Also, it is illegal to ask anybody for money who has not "demonstrated the ability, knowledge, and experience" to **LOSE ALL THEIR MONEY**. Those losers are a special class of SEC-defined investors who are the only ones approachable for movie investments. The inside joke is "The Sucker Class".

Now let's torch the second bridge (fun, isn't it, when somebody else is torching their bridges?):

The actors are part of the problem. Sheeple, they wait for "the call". They expect work to show up. They point to a resume and say "That's all you need to know. Hire Me!" They compete for crumbs at the floor of a table of sickos, and complain when their personal lives crumble. In the 1950s there were some excellent actors working for peanuts at the studios. At that time the actors were owned by the studios, not by the unions. At that time one had to be an employee of the studios to get a job. Now one has to be an employee of a union to get a Hollywood job. "Employee???" Yes, it's the unions who provide the health benefits. Got the picture? But does SAG make movies? Nope.

Anyway, in the 1950s the actors realized that the real money would be found in distributing movies, not in acting. For the first time, actors got together and started writing, directing, producing, and **DISTRIBUTING** their own films. They called their studio "United Artists" - ah, maybe you've heard of UA? Eventually it was subsumed into the current Hollywood format (became part of MGM, which is being bought by Sony) when some actors started claiming they were "more important" than the others, and sucked off the profits in pre-production salaries. I repeat, actors are part of the problem.

Now let's torch the third bridge. Daggum, it's getting hot around here:

People want guarantees. Everybody wants up-front money as a guarantee they'll get something. Anything, because the distribution system has discovered they can expense just about anything against the revenues coming from those ticket booths. Amazingly, Water World (once the largest-ever grossing film at \$245million) never made a dime in booked profit to pay back its investors.

Now let's torch the fourth bridge. Egos in charge of the budgets.

Kevin Costner got his \$90mil up front, pulled right out of the investment package. Before the movie was finished. This is the same guy who caused the movie to go \$45mil over budget, including wrecking the \$9mil sailing catamaran himself, then insisting it be built again. For more money.

Now let's torch the fifth bridge. Lawyers. Steam heat.

Of course I'm going to hear from one (or even several) of the hordes of slimy creatures in the new cottage industry of suing anybody who has anything to do with any movie anywhere, in the hopes of forcing a settlement, however ridiculous the claim of the suit is. Just because I wrote this.

Go back and look at the opening smoke. I ask you, is it any wonder the actors in Hollywood are having financial difficulty? Does this make our own game plan seem a bit more rational, reasonable and (forgive me SEC, for I am about to sin) plausible?