

SCREENWRITING

Attack

Revolt of the screenwriter

"It is", says *Gladiator* writer William Nicholson, "the thing that screenwriters talk about all the time when they get together."

He's referring, of course, to the lack of involvement of screenwriters in the production process and their 'lack of identity' compared to actors, directors and producers.

The issue has risen up the agenda this year thanks to the publication of the European Screenwriters Manifesto, which puts forward proposals to boost the standing of screenwriters. And it's a subject which Nicholson will be addressing at next month's annual International Screenwriters Festival (3-6 July) in Cheltenham.

Nicholson, who is not formally linked with the Manifesto, argues that the problem became entrenched with the new wave of film criticism pioneered by Cahiers du Cinema in the 1950s. Suddenly it was fashionable to identify the director as the 'auteur' of a work. Until then, only actors had been formally recognised. Now says Nicholson 'we need a third evolution

in which smart, intelligent people start to notice the writers."

Besides, adds Nicholson it's "stupid of producers to minimise the contribution of writers. If you do that, you get angry or frightened writers. And that's a place where you can't do great work."

Hollywood is well known as the worst place for writer recognition, with authors regularly replaced and up to ten people scripting a film. British television, says Nicholson, is far better.

However, he's not sure if the Manifesto will achieve all its aims. So long as screenwriters are not risking their own money in projects, he says, he doubts how strong their bargaining position can be.

DOCUMENTARIES

A developing talent to watch

One name to look out for this month is Sharmeen Obaid-Chinoy. The 27-year-old documentary-maker is hotly tipped to win the Broadcast Journalist of the Year Prize at the annual One World Media Awards (16 June), which recognises coverage and analysis of the developing world.

Best known for her work for Channel 4's *Unreported World* (*Birth of a Nation*) and *Dispatches* (*Afghanistan Unveiled*), Pakistan-raised and US university-educated Obaid-Chinoy could be the youngest-ever recipient of this prestigious prize.

Specialising in covering South East Asia, Obaid-Chinoy has already built up an impressive list of credits with other films for PBS, Al Jazeera and The New York Times.

She's now developing another project about Pakistan through *Dispatches*. "Very little that comes out of Pakistan is from people who have lived there," she argues. "It's become much more radicalised; it's taken ten steps backwards, rather than forwards."

A print journalist initially, Obaid-Chinoy got her first TV break after sending around 80 proposals for a documentary about the lives of refugee children in Karachi who'd fled Afghanistan after the invasion. The president of New York Times Television emailed back, invited her to New York and agreed to fund the doc even though she knew nothing about film-making. "TV is all about luck," she says.

Other shortlisted broadcast journalist candidates are Al-Jazeera English's Nadene Ghouri and BBC2 *Newsnight's* Paul Mason.

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Chraib every day queues outside gger. And one day e shots. And people ne and saying 'you ng people inside'. It 's biggest scoops ur Hersh finally u had to do was ide."



Ingenious Media ght a controlling Specialist Two ingenious Ventures vani will join Two -executive director. ent will focus on production TV has also sealed ng an interactive for US network and gaming and



Staffing up this month is Love Productions. The indie is to expand in the UK and has opened James is to be executive entertainment and finance Roberts is to become joins from Fremantle a from Endemol's interactive Pact has hired four staff Simpson and Matthew become out-of-London Underhill becomes new and Cathy Ditchfield lea



ITV's Jay Kandola has bought a trio of the LA screenings. *Pushing* Warner Brothers Television stars the UK's d is about a man who finds people back from the dead. *ngtown*, are both from CBS *ane* is about a Cuban ly running a large rum and s in Florida and *Swingtown* burban drama. *Pushing* *ngtown* will show on ITVI still awaited on



Greenlights this month include a new **Kudos** drama, *Outcasts*, for BBC1 about a group of misfits and criminals searching for a home away from Earth. **Lion Scotland** bags its first drama, with a one-off for BBC4 about the 1954 Wolfenden Committee that looked into decriminalising homosexuality. **IWC** is to make fly-on-the-wall doc *The Planners* about local planning departments. **TwoFour** is making a *Hotel Inspector* spin-off for Five Life. **Talent TV** is mak