

I joined the WGGB delegation to Warsaw and WCOS03 with no real idea of what to expect. I'd only met two of the other WGGB members before and then only briefly. But the chance to spend time with the many working screenwriters that would attend the conference was irresistible.

It was a packed programme, the opening film presentation followed by two full days of talks, panels and debates. Most generated good discussions but the one on under-representation of women screenwriters in the industry was, I felt, an opportunity lost. Too much time was spent proving, using statistics, what we already knew – there is a big problem and not nearly enough time was given to trying to find solutions.

WCOS03 was primarily about TV. The Danish model was gone into in depth, starting with a brief summary of how the current run of successes began with “new people being brought in at the top of Danish radio” – which left the intriguing question of what happened to the people who were already in those top jobs? I'm a big fan of the Scandinavian way of doing things as my only feature screenwriting commission (to date) was from a Swedish production company. Long may their successes run.

As a writer of film and theatre, rather than TV, one statistic struck me forcibly when Saket Chaudhary from India said that between 1,300 and 1,400 features were made in India per year. I told him we make about four per year in Scotland.

One thing that I did get a lot of was the feeling of solidarity. Chris Keyser, President of the Writers Guild of America West, said in his closing remarks: “In five minutes or so, when I conclude my remarks, we will all turn to each other and say goodbye and head home. Across town, or a continent or an ocean. We will go back to writing alone. That is how most of us work – in rooms, by ourselves. But whenever I speak to members of my own Guild, I remind them that we write alone, together.”

That struck a big chord with me. Trying to have a career as a working screenwriter in the UK sometimes feels like trying to nail smoke to the wall. To know there are many, in the UK and across the globe, who achieve long and successful careers, is inspiring, empowering and highly motivating. And as for not having met many other members of the WGGB outside Scotland, I feel I've not only done that, I've also gained some new friends.

**Alistair Rutherford**