

VFX Workers Protest Oscar Day for Second Year

By John Vanderhoef

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For the second year in a row, more than 500 VFX workers and supporters [gathered](#) along Hollywood Boulevard on the day of the Academy Awards in an effort to call [attention](#) to the plight of VFX labor. While last year's [protest](#) was more broadly focused on a range of concerns, this year's protest centered on combating foreign subsidies that have drawn VFX work away from LA to other parts of the world.

The group [ADAPT](#) (Association of Digital Artists, Professionals, and Technicians) [organized](#) this year's protest to directly address what they see as the problem of foreign subsidies. ADAPT characterizes foreign subsidies as “corporate welfare” for Hollywood studios, and suggests producers use subsidies to “game various governments against each other.” Ultimately, ADAPT suggests that jobs stay in areas like Vancouver only as long as government handouts do, and as soon as a city reduces its subsidy or another location offers a better one, producers follow.

ADAPT has been working with a law firm in Washington DC to

explore implementing a duty levied on imported VFX work, which would effectively negate the savings of international subsidies and help neutralize global competition. Ironically, the organization's legal efforts have been [bolstered](#) by recently discovered MPAA advisory documents that [argue](#) "imported electronic transmissions" must qualify for certain protections under tariff law now that digital distribution is replacing the shipment of physical goods. ADAPT lawyers believe the logic will help them classify VFX work in a similar manner.

Although bothered by rain and completely [ignored](#) by the televised awards ceremony, including nary a mention by Best Achievement in Visual Effects [winners](#) who worked on *Gravity*, the protest still managed to generate some buzz, notably a mention by Conan O'Brien on his TBS late night program. The FX Podcast also [recorded](#) an episode of its show during the protest, offering an on-the-ground perspective that captures the frustration and energy of the crowd. Chief among the many attendees was [Daniel Lay](#), known for his [VFX Soldier blog](#). Lay co-founded ADAPT and led the protest organizing efforts.

Despite the rising status of VFX industry, the sector has been in [turmoil](#) for over a decade, a situation made palpable with massive layoffs and bankruptcy, most [recently](#) exemplified in the closing of Canada-based Modus.