

## MORE FROM LES

by Les Wedman

VANCOUVER—Montreal and Toronto have their annual film festivals. Banff has a festival of TV films. Vancouver used to have an officially-recognized international film festival and next year, everything going as planned, it will have another.

This time, though, it will be an International Children's Film Festival, a 10-day event for which strong support already has been promised, with even more interest from all levels of the community anticipated before the festival becomes a reality in the fall of 1982.

Filmmaker Tom Shandel, also on the board of Pacific Cinematheque, is chairman of the festival's planning committee. Represented are provincial government departments, Canadian Film Development Corporation, public agencies and private industry as well as artistic groups.

Pacific Cinematheque, which had been researching a festival of its own for more than six months, decided to join forces to stage a film festival that will have greater roots in the community. Cinematheque's Paul Yeung, who ran the Hong Kong Film Festival for three years, will be offering his expertise, and Cinematheque will be the mechanism that runs the children's festival.

Also involved with the planning is filmmaker Bahmann Farmanara, now living in Vancouver. Before the Islamic revolution in Iran, Farmanara was connected with the Teheran International Children's Film Festival, one of the most popular, important and lavish events in the film world.

"In a very modest way," says Shandel, "we hope to have Vancouver fill the gap."

The festival currently is budgeted at \$250,000 and most of the money is expected to come from the private sector, with federal and B.C. government participation on a lesser scale. The Vancouver festival people will be working closely with Festival of Festivals' programmers, one of whom came out from Toronto to consult with planners here.

It's far too early for details, but according to Shandel, the festival will offer daytime screenings for schools and students, family screenings in early evening, and later—for adults—a program of films about children.

The Vancouver International Children's Film Festival will be a competitive one, with a full jury selected from notables around the world. One of the first visible signs of the festival and it's on the drawing boards now, is a poster to introduce the festival image and create a presence in all countries from whom films are expected.

A dozen years ago Universal Studios made Marv Newland "an incredibly great" offer for his first animated short, *Bambi Meets Godzilla*.

For an exclusive seven year contract to use the cartoon any way they liked, Universal offered him \$50. What's more, he was willing to take it.

"I was interested. Fifty bucks was a lot of dough. I was still a student and I didn't think much of the picture. It was just something I dashed off," says Newland now.

Currently he's best known to western moviegoers as creator of another animated short—a nine-minute *Sing Beast Sing*, the second animated film he's done from an original story.

And although it was entered in this year's Academy Awards and in Canada's Genie Awards' competition—nominated in neither—*Sing Beast Sing* hasn't made Newland either a rich man or so much in demand as an animator that he can't handle all the work landing on his International Rocket Ship company doorstep in his walk-up studio in downtown Vancouver.

Of course he has competition in his field. There are half a dozen established animators

in Vancouver all hustling for the money to be found in TV commercials, TV films and animated features.

They're a friendly lot, though, and occasionally even work together although right now, says Newland, "everyone's running a little bit desperate."

He is carrying around in his pocket a cheque for one week's rental of *Sing Beast Sing* to a commercial movie chain. It's for \$17 plus change and he says he's been offered as little as \$10 per week, which he's turned down. Seattle is the best place for short films, he finds. Theatres there pay \$50 a week, which is what he'd have accepted for seven years for *Bambi Meets Godzilla* until Universal's lawyers thought there could be problems with the names in the title. That ended the offer.

To do animated shorts Newland goes out and looks for investors the same way live action filmmakers do. It's a matter of finding someone who's interested in making an investment that won't pay off for five years or so—a long term investment. *Sing Beast Sing*, which took Newland about five years to complete and get into theatres was the first animated film to be done under the Canadian tax incentive that allows film investors to write it off.

Newland actually leaves the fund-raising to others "because there's something about straight business that takes the wind out of your sails. In dreaming up cartoons it's hard to be really silly and still be a good business person."

What he wants to do is three

shorts at a time so he can use them as a package to sell and make a fantastic TV deal. That could happen and allow his investors to make their money back inside a year.

If he had anything to complain about, he suggests, it would be that after doing *Sing Beast Sing*—and he's glad it's over—and doing what he calls "two pretty neat TV commercials, beautifully produced and, I think, very successful," there's been nothing happening.

He's been walking around as if the whole world hated him. That's an exaggeration because Newland has been working on Ivan Reitman's \$7.5 million animated feature, *Heavy Metal*. Most of the work is being done in Montreal and Toronto—and he has lost some artists to the east for this project. But here he and his freelance animators are right on schedule with their part in getting this Canadian feature finished by fall. It's the first feature he's worked on.

He concedes he has to do "whatever pays the rent" but his love is doing animated shorts even though the financial return on that is a bit small. Initially you can't make money but "if it's a decent picture it will never wear out and never date itself."

Even though they are old, Newland still laughs at *Daffy Duck*, *Tom and Jerry* and even *Farmer Al Falfa* when he runs across these ancient cartoons in theatres.

"I love movies. I love anything made on film," he says.

He has lost interest, however in ever making a live action film because "everybody in the world thinks they can make a live picture."

Jorgen Wedseltoft certainly does and he is making one. It's

going to be called *Sing Marv Sing* and it's scheduled to be at least a half-hour film about Marv Newland and his work. Wedseltoft, who has made films in the U.S. before moving here to go into the theatre business, is aiming at educational television.

But making a movie about Marv Newland means it will be entertaining as well. ●

## Wilks-Close still in business, says head men; prods go

TORONTO—The rumours circulating in the television industry that Wilks Close Productions have gone bankrupt are greatly exaggerated.

According to Wendell Wilks, the rumours probably began when they laid off some of their staff and moved their offices while undergoing a \$4 million refinancing.

Wilks told *Cinema Canada* that, "You don't go bankrupt and then instantly get new money from your bank."

Wilks-Close is currently developing two new series, *The McLean Show*, which Wilks describes as "a Canadian Phil Donahue" which is being shot in Calgary, and *The Marty Allen Show*, a comedy variety to follow their successful variety series, *The Palace*.

Wilks said that his company had been carrying a large overhead and had some 'payables' left outstanding, but that those financial problems which had led to the rumours were now behind them.

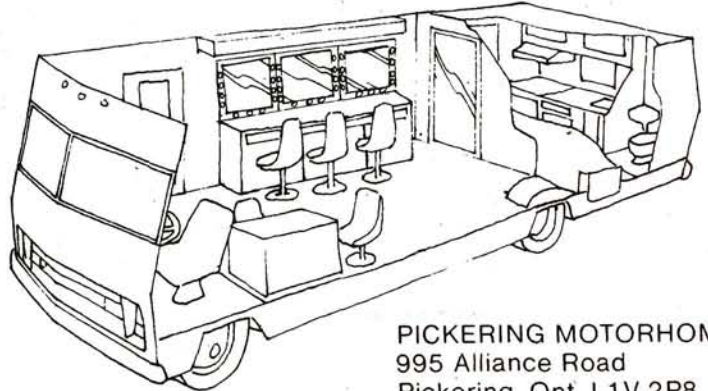
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