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 its influence is the new diversity of shows being submitted for screening in early 1982.

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 in any way they liked, Universal offered him $50,000. What’s more, he was willing to take it. It was an offer he couldn’t refuse.

Currently he’s known best to western moviemakers 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 Golden 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 door at his Vancouver studio.

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 $37 plus change and he says he’s been offered as little as $50 per week, which he’s turned down. Seattle is the best place for short films, he finds. The business pays $50 a week, which is what her had accepted for seven years for Bambi Meets Godzila 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 film-makers 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 got 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 hasn’t been working on Van Reitman’s $7.5 million animated feature, Heavy Metal. Most of the work is being done in Toronto and Montreal 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 many of the animated features. Even though they are old, Newland still laughs at many of the animated features.

“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 Wedelsohn 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. Wedelsohn, who has made films in the U.S. before moving here to get into the theatre business, is aiming at educational television.

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

Wilk’s-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.”

Wilk’s-Close is currently developing a two new series, The McLane 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 over, head and had some ‘payables’ left outstanding, but that those financial problems which had led to the rumours were now behind them.