

# Disney opens up animation options

## Studio plan could benefit Cap students

DISNEY'S PANACHE has lent a shine to Capilano College's new commercial animation program.

By Ian Noble

News Reporter

The 22 students in the program, which was introduced this year, welcomed Disney's announcement that the international entertainment company — famous for its animation in features such as *The Lion King* — would be setting up a studio in Vancouver in early 1996.

Said Mike Luney, a Victoria native who's lived cartoons since he was a kid: "Vancouver has a lot of studios to begin with, but having Disney is a dream come true."

Noting Disney's high profile and "amazing" quality, he added that it's great to have Disney in "our back yard."

Vanessa Wong, a rabid fan of *The Lion King*, said the Disney move gives her a chance to work for Disney, her ultimate goal.

But Gord Heath isn't looking that far ahead, noting he still has 1½ years to go in the animation program.

Still, he recognizes that the more work available, "the better it is for us."

On Nov. 30, Walt Disney subsidiary Walt Disney Animation Canada Inc. announced it would open a Canadian studio with offices in Vancouver and Toronto, creating about 200 jobs.

The Canadian studio will produce home videos in connection with Walt Disney Television Animation, which produced *The Return of Jafar*, a sequel to *Aladdin* and the best-selling "direct-to-home" video of all time.

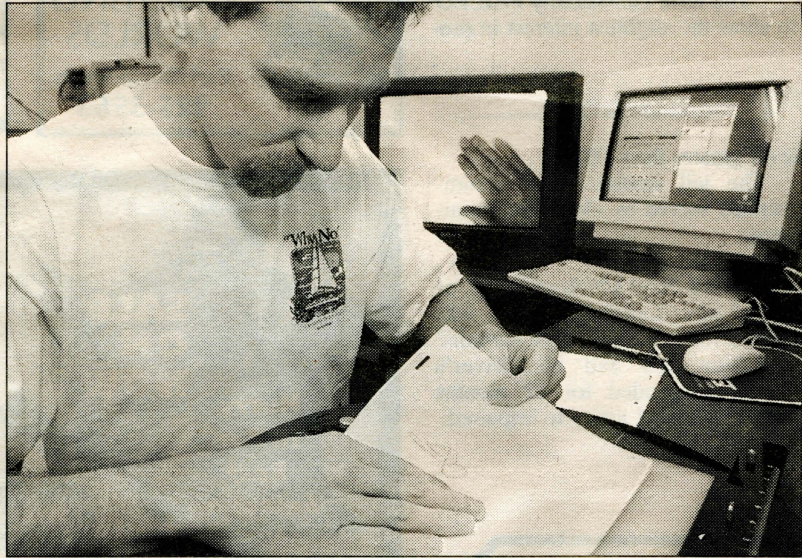
Disney is currently looking for studio space in Vancouver.

According to Capilano College, animation has become a growth industry in B.C., but is limited by a shortage of trained commercial animators.

For program coordinator Don Perro, Disney will likely become the largest studio in a string of about eight Lower Mainland studios that could hire his graduates.

"Even though it now looks as good as it ever has in Canada, it's still an up-and-down industry," said Perro.

But Disney is not the only fish in the animation sea.



NEWS photo Mike Wakefield

**COMMERCIAL ANIMATION student Gordon Heath uses leading digital equipment in the painstaking process of creating cartoons.**

Perro has spoken with other major animation players, such as Warner Brothers and Fox, to let them know the fledgling program exists and what its goals are.

Those goals, he said, are to train commercial animators to work in areas such as television, feature films, commercials, and computer animation.

Reaching that level takes hard work, said Perro.

The painstaking animation process includes detailed study of how things move and are structured, he added.

Nodding toward a frozen frame of a running gazelle on the classroom's television screen, Perro said: "You can't animate a gazelle unless you know how a gazelle moves. If you don't understand the live action, you won't be able to animate it to make it believable."

One drawing is graphic design, 3,000 drawings are animation, said Perro.

Heath understands the demands of the job.

Although he enjoyed cartoons as a child, he now looks at animation from a new perspective.

"It's still fun but you look at things in a different light," he said. "Basically, what it comes down to is a lot of hard work."

Wong reiterated much of what Heath said.

When asked if animation is magical, she replied, "No, it's a lot of hard work."

At Capilano, 80% of the commercial animation courses focus on drawing, said Perro.

Students are trained in all areas of commercial animation, then specialize in areas such as layout design, animation, character design, special effects animation, and computer animation in their final semester.