

## **Conversions Could Ruin 3D**

*FILM: Industry leaders say quality should match price.*

By **Mark Madler**

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As one of the biggest cheerleaders in the entertainment industry when it comes to 3D films, Jeffrey Katzenberg is all about attracting converts to the format.

Don't, however, expect him to be cheering on converting 2D films to 3D. Well, at least the poorly planned and executed conversions.

Katzenberg, chief executive of Glendale-based DreamWorks Animation Inc., used his recent appearance at the 3D Entertainment Summit at the Universal Hilton to go on the offensive against bad conversions, saying that they would lead to an audience backlash.

Katzenberg had other things to say about 3D as well but conversions and the fact that audiences pay a premium to watch poor-looking movies was one he kept returning to.

"The conversion process is time consuming," Katzenberg told the audience of some 300 industry professionals at the third annual conference. "The more you rush it the crummier it looks."

While no one specific film was referenced as an example of a bad conversion, those in the room knew which one Katzenberg was referring to (cough, "Clash of the Titans," cough).

With six of the top 10 films of the year so far having been released in 3D, the format's supporters continue to defend it against charges it is a fad or gimmick.

One of the continuing challenges remains the lack of screens to show the films, which gives the impression that 3D films don't live up to their box office potential because they get yanked from theaters too soon.

As an example, Katzenberg referenced how during the summer "Toy Story 3" made way for "The Last Airbender" and that both had to make way for "Despicable Me" in a matter of weeks.

The legitimate complaint about 3D films not being as bright as 2D films is being addressed with the next generation of projectors, Katzenberg said. Those projectors will be laser-based and will make the brightness on par with 2D films, he said.

In his opinion, audiences and exhibitors have embraced 3D films and now the ball is in Hollywood's court to provide films that are worth the higher ticket price, Katzenberg said.

The opportunity for all the studios is in jeopardy because of poorly done conversions. The industry can follow the path of quick, cheap post-production 3D or the path of James Cameron and other directors and deliver on the promise of this new medium, he told the audience.

Barry Sandrew, founder and president of Legend3D and a panelist at the summit, was in complete agreement with what Katzenberg had to say about quick and cheap conversions.

"You get what you pay for," Sandrew said. "It is labor intensive and requires expensive talent to do it the right way."

Legend did some of the conversion work on "Alice in Wonderland" and is currently working on a few other feature films and some commercials.

Sandrew originally founded his company to do the first round of colorizing old black and white movies. He later improved that technology and as 3D made its comeback realized that the conversion process was not that different from colorization.

The biggest challenge Sandrew faced was developing the software to make two dimensional images into three dimensions. That took some five years and it wasn't until 2009 that Legend's first conversion project – a commercial – made it into theaters.

Now that 3D is more commonplace there are more and more conversion companies coming out of the woodwork. A similar scenario happened when colorization was first being done in the 80s, Sandrew said.

"This is not an easy thing to do," Sandrew said. "There will be some small VFX houses that think they can do it."

One of those new conversion companies is inner-D, based in Westlake Village. The company used the summit as its "coming out party," in the words of its president, Grant Boucher.

Inner-D has done one film conversion so far, this summer's "Piranha 3D" from the Weinstein Company. The film was conceived to be in 3D but couldn't be filmed that way because of so much of the action taking place on water or underwater, Boucher said.

Converting the film took about 12 weeks and that was after starting with one process and then starting over from scratch with a different conversion process

Boucher has big plans for inner-D. He is talking with other studios and has a goal in mind of converting older catalogue 2D titles into 3D.

"I won't be satisfied until we can do something like "Star Wars" or "Gone With the Wind," Boucher said.

#### Burbank Firm's Process

The TrioScopics display at the 3D summit promoted the films using the Burbank firm's anaglyph 3D process, including the DVD release of "Ice Age: Dawn of the Dinosaurs," which came out this month.

TrioScopics has made it easier to watch 3D films at home because its system works with any television and DVD player so there is no new equipment to buy.

Anaglyph is a technology nearly 150 years old but the company's ongoing research and development has made vast improvements, said founder and President John Lowry.

"Ice Age" was released with four pairs of glasses developed by TrioScopics and Lowry anticipates sales of the DVD will greatly add to the 75 million pairs the company has already shipped.

"Not bad for an idea that everybody says is crazy," Lowry said.

### **Westdoc**

The Westdoc conference brought together producers and distributors of reality, non-fiction and documentary programming on Sept. 13 and 14 in Santa Monica.

This was the second year for the conference, which was co-founded by Richard Propper, an Encino-based distributor of reality programming.

Propper led a panel discussion on how established production companies stay fresh and competitive that included as speakers Jonathan Murray of Bunim/Murray Productions in Van Nuys, and Eric Schotz, president and CEO of LMNO Productions in Encino.

Staying relevant, the panel members agreed, centered around finding big characters to base a show around.

For LMNO, these characters need to be larger than life.

"Those are the people we want to be in business with," said Schotz, whose company has made shows aired on Discovery Health, TLC, A&E, Fox, and HGTV.

Bunim/Murray has been making reality and non-fiction programming for more than 25 years, including the cable warhorse, "The Real World."

Their strategy is to tailor a show for a specific network, Murray said.

For example, "The Bad Girls Club," about seven self-proclaimed "bad girls" living together and trying to turn their lives around, was developed with the Oxygen network in mind, Murray said.

He would rather pitch fewer shows and be more focused on a network's programming needs.

"I want to go in with this thing they cannot say no to," Murray said.

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