

3D And The Need For Speed

HD Essentials

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With interest in digital cinema growing, so too has curiosity surrounding 3D stereoscopic technology. Leading directors such as James Cameron have shown interest in filmmaking in the 3D realm, as well as in converting existing titles for 3D release. This topic was addressed during the recent IBC, as part of its Digital Cinema theme day, which touched upon production and business models, and concluded with a 3D screening of Sony's recent release Monster House.

Meanwhile, Jeff Edson--CEO of Miami-based Assimilate, which is the maker of the Scratch data post workflow system--reported that 3D TV monitors are currently "in alpha mode," so 3D could be a market for television as well as theatrical distribution. "It will become pervasive," Edson predicted, "but filmmakers and post houses need high-performance digital tools that keep them at the forefront of industry trends like 3D for viewing audiences, and they can no longer pay an arm and a leg to get them."

With this in mind, as part of the IBC exhibition, Los Angeles-based Cobalt Entertainment--a 3D, digital imaging, project management, technology development, film production, and image processing company--announced that it had constructed a production and post workflow for 3D stereoscopic motion pictures with Assimilate. The companies believe their workflow could greatly reduce the time spent in production and post.

Assimilate's Scratch system will be the heart of the post workflow, handling editing, conforming and color correction; Boxx Technologies offers the workstation technology.

Limitations of 3D production may include heavy equipment and long production schedules. Cobalt's digital 3ality Systems cameras are designed to be lightweight and to utilize advanced image processing to provide instantaneous dailies, and enable production schedules that match a standard 2D schedule. By using the dual-DVI outputs on the nVidia Quadro FX cards and the functionality of the Scratch CONstruct, the companies said that users in post could create a timeline with right-eye material on one layer and left-eye material on another. The two clips could be edited as a single instance and color grading, or other effects data, could be applied and copied. Assimilate reported that once editorial fine-tuning and color grading has been applied, the dual-stream stereo imagery could be outputted directly from Scratch to the screen for review. Further, Assimilate claimed that viewing of stereoscopic material could occur immediately without the need for additional post processing.

Reporting that there is a product development roadmap in place, Edson said, "Cobalt technology will be integrated into Scratch to optimize Scratch for stereoscopic films." He expected that this development would be ready in six to nine months and involve preview capabilities of the work in post, which is currently a challenge.

"Our business is making 3D easy for filmmakers so that they can expand their creativity and deliver a high-resolution film or digital product, and it only gets better from here," added Cobalt CEO Steve Schklair. "We are completing construction of a new 20,000 square foot studio in Burbank, which will make real-time 3D post and viewing simpler."