

Inventor Lenny Lipton Brightens Up 3D

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There was no doubt that in spite of all the star power at ShoWest, including award recipients Jerry Bruckheimer, Katherine Heigl and Todd Phillips, the star that seemed to shine the brightest was the new technology – namely 3D. As Michael Lynton, the CEO of Sony Pictures Entertainment said in his keynote speech, “The movie business is after all the child of technology.” One thing the industry can expect is growing pains as this child develops. In fact, the limited number of screens combined with the huge success of films like “Avatar” and “Alice in Wonderland” is already creating scheduling concerns for upcoming films like “Clash of the Titans 3D” from Warner Brothers and Paramount’s “How to Train Your Dragon”. The growing demand for 3D films also raises questions regarding ticket price increases and the impact of this on independent filmmakers.

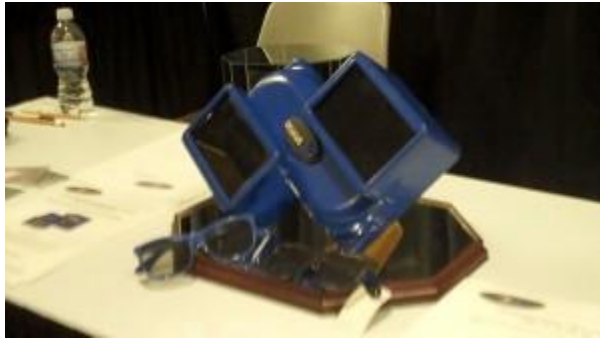


Inventor Lenny Lipton

Taking all of this into account, it comes as little surprise that new alternatives in the 3D marketplace were on hand for demos. One of the most impressive is the OculR system from OCULUS3D. Led by Chief Science Officer by Lenny Lipton, who holds 41 granted and more than 50 pending patents central to the majority of 3D projection and display systems, his fellow founders Albert Mayer, Jr, a camera designer at Panavision for 26 years, and Marty Shindler, whose 30 year career has included positions with 20th Century Fox and LucasFilm’s Industrial Light and Magic, have equally impressive credentials.

Speaking proudly about his latest invention Lipton said, “It’s extremely bright. It’s a very beautiful picture. Ultimately if it didn’t give a beautiful image, we wouldn’t be talking about it. It’s 2-3 times brighter than the vast majority of digital projection systems. It’s the brightest stereoscopic projection system in the world, even though it may well be the least expensive, so

the idea is to help the people who can't afford digital or who are reluctant to get into 3D. The key concept I think is that the public and the exhibitors are on the side of stereoscopic movies.”



New for 3D, the OculR

Lenny appears to be on target with his analysis and the combination of high quality and lower costs could definitely make his system a contender in the 3D ring. He continued, “Nobody goes to see a movie because it’s digital. People want to see movies because they’re stereoscopic. We want to have an alternative for the exhibitors and for the public because there are so many films that are being released the studios can’t possibly appreciate their return on investment with one movie colliding into another. There aren’t enough screens so that the multiplexes can engage in the process of rotation, where they can move the movie down to a smaller theatre when the picture starts to wane, but there’s still a profit to be made. So, by taking advantage of the existing motion picture infrastructure, which would be everything from shooting the film to post production to projection, we think that we have a solution that can put tens of thousands of screens out there in North America and in the rest of the world rapidly because we’re not dependent upon the deployment of a digital platform for stereo. The deployment of digital projectors is slow. It’s costly and it’s very slow. There are 130,000 film projectors left in the world that do not have to be modified. They don’t have to be changed. All the exhibitor has to do is buy or lease our lens and, of course, the studios need to make prints that are compatible in that format.”

OCULUS3D is already working with a couple of Labs in Hollywood capable of making the prints. “Once the movie’s been made stereoscopically whether it’s a CG movie or whether it’s a photographic movie, as it goes through the DI process, you can do a film out in our format. That can be printed using conventional motion picture printing techniques by any laboratory like Technicolor or Deluxe and the print cost is exactly the same as a studio print. The length of the film is the same.”



Lenny talks 3D and his invention with the Media at ShoWest

One of Lipton's main considerations was the ease with which his system can be utilized by projectionists. "It shouldn't be any harder to go between 2D and 3D," he commented. To ensure this, Lenny spent 3 days a week for 4 months in a projection booth in the Valley tweaking his invention. He observed how projectionists assembled and set up projectors and film reels. "You're talking about people who might be getting 8 bucks an hour in L.A., showing a 200 million dollar movie. It's a paradox in which I understand what the exhibitors concerns are and I see it from their point of view. We have to give them a stereoscopic projection product that lets them make a buck and also produces a good quality image," he explained.

Perhaps best known for his earlier invention the Zscreen, which is at the heart of the stereoscopic projections system, Lenny claimed that all DLP stereoscopic systems, whether they are made by RealD, Dolby or some other competitor uses something that he's invented. "They're all using technology that I developed and my colleagues developed in the early 1980's at StereoGraphics Corporation, so I am very familiar with what it takes to make a beautiful stereoscopic image and really make products, real world products. I've applied everything that I've learned with my colleagues in the invention portion of our business."

Lipton also addressed the effect of 3D on independent filmmakers. "If there were more theatres, independents could show their movies in those theatres. As long as there are only 4,000 stereoscopic theatres in the United States, out of 37,000 theatres, it's not just the majors who have a problem, it's all the independents. That's going to get incrementally better in the next year or two, but still most of the projectors in the world are film projectors and I'm sure that most stereoscopic production will be digital. The vast majority of it will be electronic or digital. They just go through the DI process. They do a film out, then they've got a release, which is remarkably similar to the way movies are made today, 2D movies."

Aside from being respected for his inventions, Lipton is also known for writing the book, *Independent Filmmaking*, which was the early standard text in many film schools and remained in print for over 20 years. "That book was written when the term independent filmmaking meant something different, that people didn't necessarily have aspirations to make features. When that book was written, we were coming out of a vast countercultural movement in which people repudiated the monopoly capitalist cinema and were thinking about making independent movies that were non narrative. Today independent filmmaking means you're making a movie that's going to Sundance and you're going to be a feature filmmaker, so it's a different era," he

explained. He feels that the book stayed in print for so long because motion picture technology changes very slowly, but believes that digital technology is going to be around for awhile.

Another famous footnote on Lenny's resume is being the author of the childhood favorite *Puff the Magic Dragon*. He wrote the poem as a college freshman in 1959 and it then went on to become the popular song sung by the group Peter, Paul and Mary. Today, it's the number one children's picture book in the United States and is being translated into 14 languages. He said with a smile, "*Puff the Magic Dragon* has been my friend. Puff is a great guy. Puff has been my venture capitalist, my investor. I've never met an investor like Puff. He's never asked for anything. He isn't arrogant. He isn't a fool. He's magical."

The modest inventor explained his love for the profession this way, "I like creating because I like making things. Even as a little kid I liked making things. I fell in love with stereoscopic imaging, when I was a boy, and that's what I've done and I apparently have the ability to pursue this field. I like it a lot."

It's obvious from his success that Lenny Lipton has found his calling in life. It will be interesting to see where his newest invention, the OculR, will find a home in the new world of 3D technology.

For more information go to Lenny's website <http://www.lennylipton.com/> or the OCULUS3D site at <http://www.oculus3d.com/>.

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