

Client: Science North

Project: Placed article for newspapers in Northern Ontario

Objective: Promote new 3D theatre

Although 3D Imax cameras allow filmmakers to capture and show scenes in an exciting new way, making a 3D film is a meticulous and intricate procedure.

“3D cinema is essentially an attempt to simulate what you see in real life,” said David Lickley, the director of large format films at Science North. “You are seeing different things with each eye in an offset way and your brain puts that together.”

Our two eyes are separated by the nose bridge, that is, about three inches apart, which allows us two different views of the same object, allowing us to see it three dimensionally.

“When you are filming, you have a special camera that has two strips of film and two lenses,” Lickley said. “Those lenses are separated by the same distance that your eyes are. The lenses are virtually three inches apart, which allows the two different views that your eyes have of whatever you are filming.”

In a flat-screen film, objects don’t appear closer to you than other objects on the screen, because it’s one image. “It’s extremely difficult to film, because you need two separate strips of film going through the camera exactly in synchronization,” Lickley said.

Filmmakers use two cameras with a synchronizer between them in keep the film running at precisely the same time or one camera that is contained in one big box with two strips of film running through it. Whichever process they use, these 3D cameras use twice the film as other cameras use, making the process more expensive than 2D films.

These cameras weigh about 250 pounds, which makes them awkward and cumbersome. But there are benefits to filming in 3D.

“You can actually bring objects off the screen and into the theatre,” Lickley said. “Things in 3D are perceived to be very close – six inches from your nose, apposed to a screen that’s 20 feet away from you.”

Lickley has filmed two 3D movies for Science North. “You have the ability to get very intimate with people, in terms of floating things off the screen right in front of them – that’s the classic 3D effect. That’s a tool that you don’t have in any other format.”

“In terms of telling stories, you have an extra tool to bring things more intimately into the audience, sometimes to startle people when they need startling and to add excitement. You can shoot scenes that have a whole different interest level for people.”

Some 2D films can be converted to 3D by scanning the film into a computer, but it’s an expensive process. “The view from the eye you are missing is generated in the computer and you apply dimensionality to a scene,” Lickley said. “It’s probably not that much less expensive then shooting in 3D in the first place.”