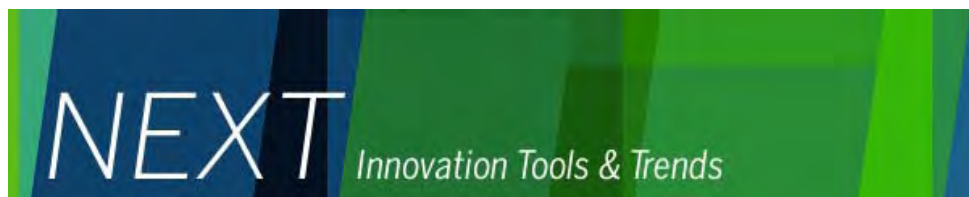


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3D TV: Not Ready for Prime Time

Posted by: Michael Arndt on February 27

The way its proponents spin it, 3D will be the next big thing in TV, a gotta-have technology that will pick up where Tivo, hi-def, and Blu-Ray have left off. Someday maybe, but not anytime soon.

A [survey](#) released on Feb. 24 by two groups with vested interests in 3D television—the [Entertainment Technology Center](#) and the [Consumer Electronics Assn.](#)—finds little demand for the new form of video. Just 16% of adults say they're interested in watching 3D movies or TV shows in their homes. And the numbers go down from there, to 14% who might want 3D video games and 12% who would prefer a 3D version of a movie over 2D.

Sheesh, Congress has numbers twice that high, according to the latest [Gallup poll](#).

The survey sponsors see hope nonetheless. Roughly one of every six respondents, or 17%, say they've seen a 3D movie in a theater in the past year. That works out to nearly 41 million adults. These movie-goers are more into 3D at home: 26% say they'd be interested in playing a 3D video game at home, for instance.

Seeing *Coraline*, *Bolt* or *My Bloody Valentine* in 3D on the big screen, in other words, makes people want to watch TV the same way. (Scroll down on this blog to see a post from my Innovation colleague Jessie Scanlon on how *Coraline* was made.)

Since Hollywood is bringing out more 3D films--19 are scheduled for release in 2009--and more theaters are installing 3D projectors, this could sell more people on 3D video. As Sanford Climan, chief executive of 3D production house 3ality Digital, [told BusinessWeek's](#) Ron Grover recently: "Once you see a picture in 3D, you never want to go back."

Meantime, television makers are showing off 3D sets at trade shows. Samsung, in fact, already has home-theater 3D TVs [on the market](#). Noting the convergence of 3D products and 3D "delivery systems," one of the survey's two chief analysts, [David Wertheimer](#), says: "We have a perfect storm brewing."

Wertheimer, who is CEO of the Entertainment & Technology Center at the University of Southern California, and co-analyst [Shawn DuBravac](#), an economist for the Consumer Electronics Assn., take heart in the answer to another question: More than half of the 1,002 adults polled by phone last December say they'd have no issue with keeping their heads still

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and wearing special glasses to watch 3D video at home.

"3D for a very long time has been a story about the movie theater," DuBravac tells me. "It's increasingly becoming a home-entertainment story, or at least the potential is there."

Still, the numbers don't scream tipping point to me. As DuBravac and Wertheimer point out in their report, only a minority of adults said they were curious about digital TV a decade ago. But that minority was 40% vs. 16% who might want 3D TV today. Maybe the glasses that 3D proponents are wearing have too much rose tint in them.

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