

Business

Local studios push 3-D tech

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DreamWorks, Walt Disney announce plans to supplement the thirst for all things 3-D in post Avatar world.

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Local entertainment giants DreamWorks Animation and The Walt Disney Co. stoked growing buzz about the future of video entertainment Thursday after each announced it would begin preparing films for in-home 3-D viewing on Blu-ray discs.

The announcements came as 3-D video technology took center stage during morning sessions at the Consumer Electronics Show in Las Vegas, where several firms announced new products geared toward in-home three-dimensional entertainment.

Glendale-based DreamWorks Animation announced late Wednesday it planned to capitalize on the popularity of 3-D movies at theaters worldwide by forming a "3-D Alliance" with Samsung Electronics America and Technicolor to deliver a "complete 3-D home entertainment solution in 2010."

The studio would collaborate with Samsung and Technicolor to produce Blu-ray 3-D discs for use on enabled high-definition televisions, representatives said.

"Two thousand and nine was the year of 3-D in theaters throughout the world as movie-goers consistently chose the premium 3-D experiences," Jeffrey Katzenberg, chief executive of DreamWorks Animation, said in a statement. "Innovative technology is at the heart of everything we do at DreamWorks Animation, so we are thrilled that Samsung's industry-leading 3-D HDTVs and Technicolor's first-of-its-kind Blu-ray technology can now bring 3-D content to consumers across the globe at home."

DreamWorks plans to put at least one of its films on Blu-ray 3-D discs this year, allowing consumers to view "Monsters vs. Aliens" at their homes and in that medium, if they are able to procure all of the equipment necessary to watch the movie.

Burbank-based Walt Disney Studios announced Thursday it would release "A Christmas Carol" on Blu-ray 3-D discs in 2010, although there are currently no plans to do the same with its animated hit, "Up".

Sony joined at least three other electronics manufacturers in announcing it would accelerate development of new 3-D capable products, including video games.

It showcased some 3-D games at the convention and announced it would release a downloadable update for its Playstation 3 console that would allow it to play Blu-ray 3-D discs.

Interest in the technology has exploded after the wild success of 20th Century Fox's hit film "Avatar," experts said.

The film, fueled by interest in its 3-D presentation, has generated more than \$1.1 billion in worldwide sales after its third weekend at the box office, ranking second in all-time movie ticket sales to Titanic, which earned \$1.8 billion, according to the tracking firm Box Office Mojo.

"Avatar has expanded the perception of 3-D movies beyond kids films and horror," David Wertheimer, executive director of the Entertainment Technology Center at the USC School of Cinematic Arts, said in an e-mail while attending the La Vegas convention.

The film's success has spurred speculation about increased 3-D film production and product development for in-home viewing, said Wertheimer, who hosted a session on 3-D technology at the conference.

Some industry executives at the convention panels called the medium transformational, he said.

"I think you'll see a reasonable amount of content in [2010], and 2011 will be a waterfall," Wertheimer said.

Consumers hoping to watch movies in 3-D from their homes will need HDTVs, Blu-ray disc players enabled to play the new format — and of course the special viewing glasses.

But those requirements are not likely to discourage the growing population of enthusiasts who have bought in to the technology, said Andy Parsons, chairman of U.S. promotions for the Blu-ray Disc Assn.

"When you have the right product being done in 3-D, it converts people," he said.

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