

Cameron: D-cinema is exhibition's salvation

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LAS VEGAS – Box office king James Cameron issued a call to arm theaters with digital cinema and digital 3-D in response to declining cinema receipts and rampant movie piracy during his keynote address Sunday at the National Association of Broadcasters' Digital Cinema Summit.

"We're in a fight for survival here," Cameron told the overflow crowd in the Las Vegas Convention Center. "Maybe we just need to fight back harder, come out blazing, not wither away and die. D-cinema can do it, for a number of reasons, but because d-cinema is an enabling technology for 3-D. Digital 3-D is a revolutionary form of showmanship that is within our grasp. It can get people off their butts and away from their portable devices and get people back in the theaters where they belong."

Cameron also took the occasion of the world's largest annual film and broadcast technology trade show to fire a few shots across the bow of the emerging trend of simultaneous releasing being promoted by 2929 Entertainment's Mark Cuban and "Bubble" director Steven Soderbergh, among others.

"We're so scared of piracy right now that we're ready to pimp out our mothers," Cameron said. "This whole day-and-date DVD release nonsense? Here's an answer: (Digital cinema is) one of the strongest reasons I've been pushing 3-D for the past few years because it offers a powerful experience which you can only have in the movie theater."

The director of the highest-grossing film of all time at \$1.8 billion worldwide said he is considering a rerelease of 1997's "Titanic" in digital 3-D just as Peter Jackson is planning at some point for "King Kong" and, possibly, his "The Lord of the Rings" trilogy. George Lucas also plans to theatrically rerelease his original "Star Wars" in 3-D timed to the space opera's 30th anniversary next year.

With filmmakers and exhibitors united behind the idea of enhanced cinema experiences, Cameron predicted that studios would become even more focused on both releasing new titles and rereleasing classics in 3-D digital cinema.

"We will reach a point in a few years when every major studio will ask how many of its four or five annual tentpoles should be in 3-D," Cameron said. "It will become almost a rule that all major 3-D animated releases will be made available in 3-D."

"Every year there will be a copy of timeless favorites brought back through (3-D) dimensionalization," he said. "The new wave of 3-D films will be the must-see films, the major releases from major filmmakers."

Cameron said that despite industrywide squabbling and fear-based decision-making associated with new technology, and even despite the fact that the major studios haven't cooperated in the past, the digital cinema rollout actually is happening.

"We're halfway through the looking glass," he said. "We're past the point where the fear of change is outweighed by the fear of not changing."

While most people associate 3-D with either animation or projection, Cameron said that there are a variety of stereographic processes that can be introduced while shooting, during postproduction, or after a movie has been archived.

Among the films testing the various 3-D waters are Walden Media and New Line Cinema's "Journey to the Center of the Earth," which is being shot live-action with stereographic cameras; Robert Zemeckis' "Beowulf," which is employing 3-D-animated performance capture; and Walt Disney Feature Animation's computer-animated "Meet the Robinsons," which will be projected in 3-D.

The filmmaker said his interest in digital 3-D goes back to his love of movies and his love of making them for the big screen. "I'm not going to make movies for people to watch on their cell phones. To me, I'd rather go back to doing some more deep-ocean expeditions," Cameron said. "I don't want that grand, visionary, transporting movie experience made for the big screen to become a thing of the past."

Among other points made during his keynote, Cameron called to stamp out any new attempts to make anaglyph 35mm films because it only would confuse the marketplace and undermine the emergence of digital 3-D. He also noted that digital projectors combined with 3-D could be a new way for exhibitors to program live events and charge more for admissions, and he said that there is a proliferation of filmmakers who want to shoot in 3-D because it is a revolutionary form of showmanship, and directors want to create their own individual stereo aesthetics