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DreamWorks going 3-D in 2009 **Studio to produce two versions of 'Aliens'**

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DreamWorks Animation is joining the digital 3-D wave.

Studio plans to release all its pics in 3-D starting in 2009. That should give a major boost to the fledgling technology now available on just a few hundred digital cinema screens.

New digital 3-D exhibition process, enabled largely by technology company Real D, has been gaining significant interest in Hollywood recently. Fox will release the James Cameron-helmed "Avatar" in 3-D in 2009, and Disney will put "Meet the Robinsons" on about 600 digital 3-D screens this month.

DreamWorks Animation CEO Jeffrey Katzenberg said the studio considered adding 3-D effects to some of its 2007 and 2008 releases but wanted to produce pics with the new exhib process in mind from the outset.

"We have not really been enthusiastic about turning 2-D into 3-D in post-production," Katzenberg said, referring to the way 3-D effects have been added to pics thus far. "It doesn't begin to touch the quality of product that is originated in 3-D."

DWA summer 2009 release "Monsters vs. Aliens" starts production this spring and will be made with 3-D in mind from the outset. Studio will produce two versions, with a standard version for nondigital screens, DVD and TV.

By waiting until 2009, studio will also benefit from a significantly higher availability of 3-D enabled digital screens.

"By that time, I think that in domestic markets we will be able to release a film entirely in 3-D," said Jim Tharp, prexy of domestic distribution for Paramount, which releases DreamWorks Animation pics.

There are just over 500 digital 3-D screens in the U.S., but that's expected to expand to several thousand by 2009.

While the studio is counting on its movies to be available exclusively in 3-D in the U.S., foreign markets will likely still be installing digital cinema systems, which are required for the new 3-D process.

Katzenberg will be discussing the studio's 3-D plans with exhibitors this week at ShoWest. Many in the exhibition industry have been getting excited about digital 3-D as a way to differentiate cinemas from home theater systems. In addition, many exhibitors have been charging \$1 or \$2 more for 3-D films.

"This is the first thing I've ever seen that is an actual opportunity for the movie business to become something completely new and unreplicable at home," observed Katzenberg. He said production costs on DreamWorks toons will go up, but he's confident his studio will make up for it with added revenue.

After "Robinsons," next pic released on some 3-D screens will be Par's "Beowulf" this fall. In 2008, New Line will release "Journey 3-D," the first live-action pic produced exclusively for the new technology.

Disney is also expected to release most of its future toons in digital 3-D, though the studio hasn't announced any definite plans beyond "Robinsons."

DreamWorks has hired Jason Clark, an exec producer on Sony's 3-D toon "Monster House," to head up its 3-D efforts along with Jim Mainard, the studio's head of research and development. It has also tapped Phil McNally, who did 3-D work on Disney's "Chicken Little" and "Meet the Robinsons," to oversee 3-D for "Monsters vs. Aliens."