



3D mania

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MUMBAI: Everyone's talking 3D. Till last year, the films and film exhibition industry was talking digitisation. So was television. This year, even as the noise on HD or high definition TV has ratcheted up with DTH services and TV channels adding to the din, everyone seems to be talking about 3D in films and television.

UFO Moviez, the company that brought the closing four matches of the Indian Premier League 3 earlier this year in 3D to cinema screens, has announced that it will 3D-enable around 1,000 multiplex screens from among the 1,989 theatre screens that it has digitised already, over the next year and a half. It will also additionally digitise 1,000 theatre screens.

There are already around 80 film screens that are 3D-enabled in India with the DCI technology, which Hollywood uses. The DCI enablement has mostly been done by Scramble in India. Published reports say that Scramble also plans to expand its 3D-enabled film screen numbers this year. The DCI technology is different from UFO's indigenously developed 3D technology.

UFO has also developed a television set top box for homes for 3D viewing, which it plans to launch later this year.

Sony, Samsung and LG have launched 3D television sets in India. Samsung has also launched its 3D Blue Ray DVD players and home theatre systems. "We expect to sell 30,000 3D television sets this year. At a price differential of 25 per cent or so, for the buyer at that level, the set is attractive. We are targeting LED TV buyers, existing LCD TV users who will upgrade, and first time early adopters hooked into high tech," said Samsung India's deputy MD, Ravinder Zutshi.

Sony expects to grab 30 per cent of the Indian TV market, strengthened by its 3D TVs.

Mumbai-headquartered Crest Animation has created a 3D animation film, *Alpha & Omega*, which will be released in the US by Lionsgate this year. India saw the production

of another 3D film, *Chhota Chetan* earlier, but *Alpha & Omega* will target a global audience.

Reliance Mediaworks is partnering with In-Three to create the world's largest 2D-to-3D conversion facility in Mumbai that can handle 30 film projects a year.

UFO Moviez is also setting up a separate content creation company that will offer 3D equipment and post production facilities. Kapil Agarwal, joint MD, UFO Moviez, said: "We are creating the whole ecosystem to encourage 3D in India."

Will Indian consumers be interested enough to justify so much 3D noise? Film

tickets will cost much more. The 3D TV sets are priced at the highest end of the spectrum, exceeding Rs 1 lakh. The companies involved in pushing 3D products and services in India point to the fact that *Chhota Chetan* was well received by the Indian viewership, that *Avatar* grossed a whopping Rs 100 crore or so, and Disney's *Alice in Wonderland* too garnered very good audiences.

"In the consumer entertainment space, 3D provides great opportunity. Manufacturers of 3D hardware and software will definitely collaborate to drive this business. Sports, entertainment and gaming will be key to driving content creation. We feel that

BIG PICTURE The din about 3D has risen as TV brands, film production and projection specialists, and filmmakers join in. They assert that this is the next big game-changer for entertainment

if quality content is available, 3D adoption will be faster in the country," said Rohit Pandit, business head, home entertainment, LG India.

There is very little 3D content available in India and creating such content is expensive. As Shashank Jare, CEO of Rakesh Roshan's film production company, Filmkraft, said, "While 3D is a big opportunity, content creation hinges on cost recovery potential and display spread. If both are viable—UFO Moviez is expanding the display opportunity—every film production house would be interested." He believes that in the first round of experimenting, film-makers will convert 2D (regular format) films to 3D. Siddharth Roy Kapoor, CEO, UTV

Motion Pictures, added: "The 3D film producer needs to ensure that his 3D production costs are recoverable. Quality, for which consumers will be willing to pay the higher ticket prices, will be necessary. If the 3D quality is poor, consumers will question the premium, something that Hollywood is already experiencing. If a film is not conceptualised in 3D, its quality cannot be up to the mark. I don't think converting 2D to 3D can deliver high quality."

Samsung, in its 3D television sets, has introduced a technology that can convert 2D to a 3D viewing experience with the use of 3D glasses. Kapoor pointed out: "With television, the subscriber pays very low monthly rates, unlike with films where viewers will be paying a premium for a 3D film. Viewing expectations will be governed by that."

Zutshi said, "While converted 2D to 3D content may not be as high quality as content shot in 3D, it is still good."

The other TV brands offering 3D sets are also upbeat. "In 2010 we will target premium buyers, primarily early adopters of technology. In future, we will want to broaden our consumer base for our 3D TVs," Pandit said. LG will launch five 3D TV models this year.

Samsung is offering 10 3D models across the LCD, LED and plasma TV platforms, with prices ranging between Rs 1.3 lakh and Rs 4.35 lakh.

TV brands are putting in marketing effort to encourage 3D. LG India tied up with UFO Moviez for the 3D display of IPL 3's final four matches on out-of-home screens such as at restaurants and clubs. UFO covered about 70 such outlets. Samsung is offering one set of 3D glasses and a copy of DreamWorks Animation's film, *Monsters vs Aliens*, free with every 3D TV set purchase.

UFO Moviez's Agarwal expects that "3D will be the game changer eventually even if the initial response may ride on novelty value. The promise is big enough for us to absorb the costs of the 3D enablement at multiplexes."

UTV Motion Pictures' Kapoor expects that the beginning of the 3D revolution will be in "starts and stops" but it will catch speed soon.

Prakash Nathan, VP operations, UTV Motion Pictures, concluded: "It's just a matter of time before we, the industry stakeholders in the 3D opportunity, start driving things." The ball, for now, is in the industry's court.

HOW 3D TECHNOLOGY WORKS

■ 3D projection separates two sets of images: what the right eye see and what the left eye sees. These are run at the same time. Glasses are polarised—right eye cannot see left-eye's image and vice versa. The brain synchronises these images to a 3D impression.

■ While DCI technology, the 3D technology used mostly in the US and by Scramble in India, has one camera interlacing left-eye and right-eye images alternately in very rapid movement, UFO Moviez has developed a two-projector system, one for each eye image. Run at the same time, the rest of the absorption process is the same.

■ For UFO, 3D-enabling screens it has already digitised earlier just means the cost of an extra projector. Digital transmission servers it put at these theatres are already 3D-compliant, able to take 3D digital satellite transmissions, beyond the digital transmissions they were already taking.

■ Samsung is offering a technology in its 3D television sets which, at a click of a remote button, can convert 2D images to 3D.

THE 3D PICTURE, IN NUMBERS

13.5 million

The total market for flat-screen - LCDs, LEDs and plasma - televisions in India

27 million

Expected sales this year of flat screens in India

Rs 4,900

Cost of Samsung's active 3D glasses (battery type); the rechargeable ones cost Rs 9,900

20%

Expected share of Hollywood films in 3D by 2014

16

Number of 3D Hollywood films expected this year

50 cents

Cost of UFO Moviez's passive 3D glasses; regular active 3D glasses cost \$150

\$ theatrical

India's theatrical collections; *Avatar* earned \$2.3 billion

Rs 14 lakh

UTV Motion Pictures' estimate of a good-quality 3D film's cost if the same film cost Rs 5 lakh in 2D

■ **CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT:** *Alpha & Omega*, *Alice in Wonderland*, *Bolt* and *Avatar* are all 3D films. *Bolt* and *Alice in Wonderland* were Disney films distributed in India by UTV Motion Pictures. *Avatar* grossed Rs 100 crore, while *Alpha & Omega* will release in Hollywood this year.