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Q&A: 3ality Technica CEO Steve Schklair

Why Hollywood Needs to Get Smart About 3D Production

By Bryant Frazer

August 26, 2011 Source: Studio Daily

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As consumer demand for 3D movies levels off in the United States and 3D television strains to attract eyeballs, some prognosticators are declaring the latest 3D renaissance to be a fad approaching its expiration date. In that environment, the combination of two of the biggest 3D technology providers, 3ality Digital and Element Technica, looks like a consolidation. But Steve Schklair, the CEO of the newly combined 3ality Technica (see our coverage here), insists that the companies are not shrinking, just combining forces in a way that will give customers more choice, not less. He's still bullish on 3D — but he agrees with the critics that Hollywood needs to wise up. We caught him via cell phone as he drove between appointments to ask him about the new company and what's next for stereo 3D.

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StudioDaily: The consolidation of two companies generally results in staff layoffs, but I've read that you've said no layoffs are planned at 3ality Technica.

Steve Schklair: I've never seen two companies combine with so little redundancy between them. Element Technica didn't have a heavy management structure, so we don't have a lot of duplication between their team and the 3ality team. We were going to increase the sales department at 3ality anyway, so bringing in their sales team gets us to that goal. 3ality doesn't do in-house manufacturing, so the whole manufacturing department moves over. 3ality doesn't have design, and we get Element Technica's design capabilities. So there really was no redundancy in terms of the companies.

What about the different product lines? What can customers of both companies expect?

Everybody considers the 3ality rig to be the highest standard in technology, and thinks of Element Technica rigs in terms of great design. We will combine some technology from the 3ality rigs into the Technica rigs and some of the design elements from the Technica rigs into the 3ality right now. Immediately. Customers will get more advanced gear no matter which company they buy from. Even better, we can use a combination of gear to build a package that includes some of both companies' gear, all of it for specific purposes. A lot of customers were buying from us, and buying from Technica, and building their own packages, but now we can put together the most specific package for a user's needs.

A lot of analysis recently has suggested a softening in the stereo 3D market, citing things like a reduced percentage of 3D ticket sales in U.S. theaters and slow adoption of 3D TV technology. How do you respond to that?

I wouldn't have made this investment if I felt there was a softening of the market. With the introduction of any new

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technology, there's a spike and then a growth curve, and now we're in the growth curve. With the introduction of any new technology, people will go for novelty, but when the novelty wears off it goes back to business as usual. It doesn't matter whether it's 3D or 2D. If it's a good movie, they'll see it, and if it's not, they won't. We're past the novelty stage where you could point the camera at the freeway and watch cars go by and people would pay to see it in 3D.

The Economist wrote an article on the death of 3D, and I wrote a **response** saying that the critic who wrote it was right, to some extent, but his conclusions were wrong. He was right that the market is leveling off because of the crap out there. 3D is being slapped on movies so the marketing department can sell the movie. It has nothing to do with the movie itself, it's not being used as a good tool, and, worse, 2D movies are being converted to 3D movies without adding anything to the story. Not a thing. It doesn't make it any worse as a *movie*, but it makes the *experience* worse, because you're wearing glasses without any payback for doing so. People are tired of that arbitrariness.

I can't mention its name in the press, but we've done a weekly show that's one of my favorite shows on TV. I would would go out and buy a 3D TV set for that reason — it's so compelling that it adds a tremendous amount to the show. But without that kind of compelling 3D content, the market is leveling out.

Do you have any influence in that regard, or do you have to just wait around and hope that the industry figures it out sooner rather than later?

We have some influence in that realm. On most projects, we're involved as a technology vendor and a consulting organization, but we're not involved in the terms of creative decision-making. Luckily, on some projects we do get involved creatively and we can push those ideas forward.

There are two projects in the works that I think will set the standards for 3D. One is Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit*, and the other is *The Great Gatsby* with Baz Luhrmann. I'm excited

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about *Gatsby* because it's not an FX movie, it's not a car chase movie, it's not an action adventure or a fight movie. It's a good old drama. Everybody wonders, why would Baz be making a straight drama, more dialog-driven than anything, in 3D? Well, he believes he can use 3D as a tool to help convey to the audience what he wants them to feel. He's been rehearsing with the 3D cameras and restaging and readjusting how he shoots the movie based on the emotions conveyed by certain 3D settings. As I wrote to *The Economist*, 3D is in its infancy. It's waiting for the storytelling language to be developed.

For more information: www.3alitytechnica.com.



 **Comments (2)** for "Q&A: 3ality Technica CEO Steve Schklair"

1. This gives 3ality access to film rigs, which puts them in the league of theatrical production groups such as Cameron Pace. With \$140 million in fresh investment, Steve is investing wisely. Hope he completely exits the reality-hack/concert 3D world soon.

Posted by Jim Piechocki on Friday, September 2, 2011 @ 09:38 AM

2. 3ality was dying slowly. They just saved themselves by buying Element Technica...

Posted by **Grant** on Sunday, September 4, 2011 @ 08:05 AM



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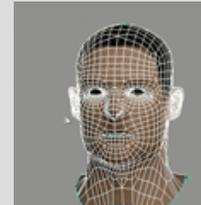
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