

Broadcast

Blog



As momentum builds for 3D TV, **Richard Sattin** reveals the growing interest in a new style of history programming that uses "stereo photography".

3D TV - in stereo

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Although it will be five years before "no glasses" 3D-TV will be available to the consumer market, the recording technology is already available. Whether you choose to mount a pair of Reds or use the new hi-def 3D rigs, or have your 2D material rendered in 3D, the demand to create libraries of S3D content is already here.

Why? Well, industry insiders are excited by the prospect of television being able to match the impact of cinema. It started with stereo TV and surround sound, then HD TV, and now 3DTV is the big watch-word. Despite many failed attempts to launch 3D to the mainstream in the past, the latest rise in cinema attendees and the success of blockbuster 3D movies in cinemas means the prospects for TV are widespread.

Following Discovery's endorsement of 3D television with their Imax/Sony collaboration, and Sky's announcement of a 24-hour 3D channel, we have already started putting together S3D promotional trailers for a number of projects, working with graphics facility Bird Studios in London's Soho.

Some of the projects include using historic stereo photographs to produce war series to coincide with the 150th anniversary of the American Civil War for 2011 and the 100th anniversary of the First World War in 2014. We are also developing a series of exploration films using stereo photographs taken by the pioneering explorers of the Americas, Africa and Asia, as well as a series of engineering projects.

People talk about 3D graphics, which are really just 2D with the illusion of depth. What we're developing is in stereo 3D or S3D. As well as high-end wildlife specials, what excites us is the potential of historic stereo photographs to create a new style of history storytelling on television. Like no other format, stereo photography can evoke the world around us in all its glory.

The real issue is how quickly we can train cinematographers. You can't just point and shoot. Each set up needs to be carefully calculated to ensure the action takes place in the right viewing plain and to reduce motion blur. Everything is shot on prime lenses, there are no zooms. It's a new visual language.

For those producers who remain unconvinced about the adoption of 3DTV in the TV industry, think about the new technology coming on stream, for which there is unlimited potential for S3D on the web. Add to this the prospects for exploiting this through DVDs, books and magazines, the possibilities are endless.

Richard Sattin is head of factual at Parthenon Entertainment