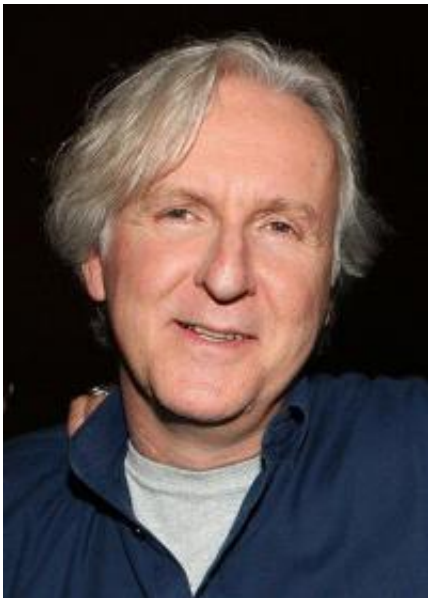


'Avatar' trailer debuts online amid buzz

August 21 2009, By SANDY COHEN , AP Entertainment Writer



FILE - In this July 23, 2009 file photo released by Ubisoft, James Cameron attends the Ubisoft Avatar: The Game party during Comic-Con in San Diego. (AP Photo/Ubisoft, Shea Walsh, file)

(AP) -- Social networking sites were abuzz Thursday over an online trailer for "Avatar," just as extended previews of the 3D sci-fi adventure were hitting screens at theaters down under.

Moviegoers in Australia and New Zealand were the first to see about 16 minutes of James Cameron's anticipated high-tech follow-up to 1997's "Titanic." Twentieth Century Fox plans to show the preview footage at theaters around the globe Friday to fans who scored free tickets online to

"Avatar Day." A glimpse at the toys, [video game](#) and 3D poster connected to the film also will be unveiled Friday.

"It was really an idea that James Cameron had to give the audience a unique opportunity to immerse themselves into this world," said Jeffrey Godsick, executive vice president of marketing for Fox. "People will get a real taste of all the different elements and the scope of this movie."

"Avatar" tells the story of humans who embody avatars to explore the spectacular, but otherwise unsafe, planet of Pandora.

The extended preview will show on 102 screens domestically and 342 internationally, with 58 countries participating, Fox spokeswoman Natalie Johnson said. Tickets sold out less than 24 hours after they were made available. A crush of fans crashed the "Avatar" Web site when it went online Monday. The same thing happened when the trailer debuted Thursday on Apple.com, Godsick said.

Fans immediately took to [Twitter](#) and Facebook to share their thoughts on the two-minute trailer. The film, set for release in December, was one of Twitter's trending topics Thursday.

"It got up to No. 2," Godsick said, "which for a movie trailer is staggering."

Tickets to "Avatar Day" were being offered for sale for as much as \$40 on Craigslist Thursday. A pair was also available for \$1,000 on eBay.

Godsick said fans must show identification along with a confirmation [e-mail](#) from the studio to be admitted to "Avatar Day" screenings, but the studio was not policing attempted online sales of the free tickets.

Paul Dergarabedian, box-office analyst for Hollywood.com, said Fox

must be "extraordinarily confident" about the "Avatar" footage to roll it out in such grand fashion.

"They're turning it into an event that is so big that it requires its own special big-screen debut, in terms of just some footage," he said. "It's all about building buzz and building excitement."

Dergarabedian said he'd never seen such a sweeping marketing move for a film still months from release. The studio itself called its "[Avatar](#) Day" effort "unprecedented."

Some of the footage to be shown Friday was previously screened at Comic-Con, the annual pop-culture convention in San Diego, last month. But some has never been seen, Godsick said.

"When you've got the real deal," he said, "the best thing you can do is let people see it."

On the Net:

<http://www.avatarmovie.com>

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