

Blockbuster 'Avatar' to accelerate 3D revolution

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The 3D screening of "Avatar" at Fox Studios on December 17 in Los Angeles, California. The runaway success of science fiction blockbuster "Avatar" will accelerate the 3D movie revolution, which has already powered Hollywood to a record year at the box office, analysts say.

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James Cameron's futuristic fantasy is on course to become the highest-grossing movie of all time after smashing the one-billion-dollar barrier in only three weeks over the weekend.

The film, which has a reported budget of between 300 and 500 million

dollars, has been hailed as a landmark in movie history and its impact will be felt across the industry, experts say.

"The ramifications of 'Avatar's' performance are huge," said Jeff Bock, chief analyst with box office tracking firm Exhibitor Relations. "Ripple effects are going to occur fast and furiously."

Bock said the stellar success of "Avatar," which is already the fourth highest-grossing movie in history, would persuade other studios that big budget 3D films represented an attractive investment.

"The gains far outweigh the risks right now and if you can have someone like [James Cameron](#) helming your [3D film](#), then you're okay to spend 300 to 500 million dollars on your film because you're going to get your money back and then some," he added.

"Right now, 3D is going to be all the rage and studios are going to jump on a big bunch of 3D films."

According to organizers of a recent 3D film festival in Belgium, more than 150 3D films are currently in various stages of production.

Among them is the long-awaited movie adaptation of comic-book hero "Tintin," directed by Oscar-winner Steven Spielberg and tentatively scheduled for release in 2011.

Cameron meanwhile is reportedly mulling a 3D version of his 1997 mega-blockbuster "Titanic," which remains the top-earning film in history with 1.8 billion dollars.

The 3D boom has been made possible by technological advances, according to movie industry insiders.

"There has been a real resurgence in 3D because the technology of [digital cinema](#) has allowed 3D to be sharper and brighter on screen and a much better audience experience," Mark Zoradi, former president of Walt Disney Motion Pictures Group, said in a recent interview.

"It gives movie-goers just another reason to actually continue to go to the cinema. It's something you can't experience at home. It's here to stay and on many [movies](#) it has to be experienced."

Jason Constantine, president of acquisitions and co-productions at Lionsgate, whose properties include the "Saw" horror films, said 3D was more than just a passing fad.

"I think the experience of 3D is going to last for more than just a few years," Constantine told AFP. "I don't think it's just a moment in time."

Action, adventure, science fiction and suspense films were all prime genres for 3D to exploit, Constantine said, provided there was "something intrinsic about the story that 3D will enhance."

Lionsgate plan to unveil the seventh film in its "Saw" franchise this year with the movie designed from "day one as a 3D experience," Constantine said.

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