

Legend3D Sets the Transformers 2D-3D Conversion Record Straight

By Valentina I. Valentini

“For us,” says Dr. Barry Sandrew, founder of Legend3D, “Transformers provided the best endorsement ever for 2D-3D conversion. Up until last week everyone thought it was shot entirely in 3D.”

In fact, Legend3D provided conversion for just over half of the entire film, with help from In-Three and Prime Focus. And along with endorsing Legend3D’s expertise, it also should prove to audiences that conversion, done correctly, can be as good as 3D camera capture, if not better.



Except that no one seems to be listening. No major news outlets have picked up the Variety article published July 19 correcting everyone’s assumption that Transformers was shot in 3D. Only a few independent websites, including this one, are even running a story on it. Are they scared? Embarrassed? Stunned into silence?

“What part of a billion dollars is a failure?” Sandrew asked an investment firm touting skepticism about 2D-3D conversion and 3D ticket sales falling during the fourth Pirates of the Caribbean box office run. And now, with final installment of Transformers’ \$100 million success and 64 percent of ticket sales owed to 3D showings, Sandrew says he feels able to shout a big “Gotcha!” to the media and reviewers and anyone else who praised Transformers’ success crediting it to the great 3D capture.

“The media is really doing the public and this industry a disservice,” says Sandrew. “One reporter is following another and they’re not doing any thinking or investigating for themselves. There is so much misinformation going around that these reporters don’t realize will hurt the industry. This experience with Transformers should be a wake up call for entertainment media outlets.”

The entertainment and consumer reviews, prior to revealing that half of the film was a 2D-3D conversion job, said that it was as good if not better than Avatar because it was shot 100 percent 3D.

“It goes to show that people don’t understand 3D at all,” Sandrew says. “They’re vilifying a process that really is making 3D work.”

It seems that more effort needs to go into learning about the process of conversion and why the format can be good in so many situations. Even Avatar had about 40 shots that needed converting. On Pirates of the Caribbean 4 Legend3D converted about two minutes – the underwater shots and the scene where Captain Jack Sparrow is racing through a town on a horse and wagon. It would have been impossible to put 3D camera rigs on that wagon and have the 3D come out watchable.

There is much more creative flexibility in conversion, and much less ocular rivalry, which is what often causes the headaches. This is because the tools on a computer are more accurate than the camera in the field, especially with a beam-splitter rig.

“It is true,” Sandrew says. “When we convert one frame into two eyes, those two eyes are identical in luminance, color, in every way, so you’re going to get a perfect match. It’s almost impossible to get a perfect match with a camera.”

Sandrew explains that the conversion shots in Transformers weren’t just intercut into the film. They were actually checker-boarded throughout and almost everywhere there were captured shots, it would be right next to a converted shot. “We had to have all the surrounding captured shots so we could match up the volume and depth,” he says. “Once we had that info, it was pretty straightforward from there.”

Sandrew credits the incredible conversion job largely to the efforts of director Michael Bay and stereographer Corey Turner, who also worked on Alice in Wonderland (also done by Legend3D)

“Bay is the first director to successfully use the captured and converted footage in a completely seamless fashion,” says Sandrew. “No one was able to tell the difference, obviously.”