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## Studio executives discuss potential of 3D

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*"Who the hell wants to hear actors talk?"  
--Harry M. Warner, Warner Bros., 1927*

NEW YORK--That famously off-the-mark wisecrack, made when the Warner Bros. co-founder was confronted by the advent of talking pictures, was given an airing Friday at the 3D Experience Executive Forum here. Likened to current naysaying about 3D movies and TV, the quote was referenced by David Naranjo, director of product development for Mitsubishi Digital Electronics, along with several other ill-fated predictions in entertainment--as if to say: They'll eat those words!

Resisting 3D may be futile, but we still don't know to what extent 3D will invade our lives. That was what executives gathered to discuss. Will 3D be a part of every screen, from TVs to ATMs, as predicted by Jim Chabin, CEO of the International 3D Society? Will it be a staple of learning tools in the classroom, as predicted by Michael P. Guillory of Texas Instruments? Or will it simply be the thing kids get excited about at the movies because it makes dinosaur tails come flying toward their noses?

Chabin said 3D will be omnipresent on all displays because "the cost of making a screen 3D is the same as making it color. It's nothing. It's just another chip and a little more gas." What holds up adoption is consumer confusion. The lack of a standard for 3D glasses is confusing enough, but couple that with the fact that most consumers don't understand that a 3D TV is also a 2D TV and what is left is an adoption cul-de-sac. Studios and hardware manufacturers love the potential. Consumers don't know what to think.

Much like high-definition TV, consumers may not initially understand the need to pay more for 3D content through their cable boxes. Delivering 3D content will heavily tax the Internet service provider, even if the format is properly compressed, meaning that already-pricey cable TV will be even pricier with 3D channels.

Of course, content is king, but the format is too nascent and, at times, too kitschy. "You can't take a bad movie, turn it into 3D, and make it a good movie," said Richard Gelfond, CEO of IMAX Corporation.

What you can do is convert 2D content into 3D content, but not everyone thinks that approach produces the best results. 3D purists think movies should be conceptualized and shot in 3D from the get-go. Others think conversion is an essential way to jump-start the 3D brand.

"There is generally about 15 to 30 percent savings when you shoot in 2D and convert to 3D," said Dr. Barry Sandrew, president of Legend 3D.

Though 2D conversion is expensive and time consuming, the fact that consumers pay more for tickets to 3D movies provides some incentive. But in the theater, 3D is a novel outing. At home, 3D can be a distraction. You can't multitask while watching a 3D film, and you can't wear any glasses besides those intended for the specific television set you purchased.

"Will consumers wear glasses in the home?" asked Robert Mayson, president of RealD.

"Speaking as someone who has worn glasses in the home since 11 years of age, the answer is yes. But the content has to be good enough."

Just because Mayson is willing to wear another set of glasses doesn't mean everyone will be. And don't hold your breath for a glasses-free 3D TV anytime soon.

"Autostereo, or glasses-free, is of course the holy grail, but you have to get there at the right quality," said Mayson. "Nobody really knows when that will come. My personal opinion is that it has to do with quality of image--and when that happens at a price us mere mortals can afford."