"THREE TIMES A

The Lost History of 3-D Trailer Production, 1953–54

By Keith M. Johnston

Abstract: This article uses the "lost" history of film and television trailers to reassess the 3-D aesthetic and its place in film history. By reconstructing and analyzing trailers from 1953 and 1954, which educated audiences about the competing 3-D technology, this article reveals a unique perspective on how film studios spoke to their audiences, positioned technology as a star attraction, and used 3-D as a potent weapon in Hollywood's attempt to revise the cinema screen of the 1950s.

Keywords: advertising, 1950s, 3-D, trailers

The trailer for *Beneath the 12 Mile Reef* (1953) promotes an exciting new star from its first frames—but that star is not human. Instead of an actor, the trailer hails Twentieth Century-Fox's CinemaScope, the technology responsible for the new, wider screen dimensions displayed in the trailer. CinemaScope is "the Greatest Step Forward in the History of Entertainment," the trailer proclaims, a "modern miracle," its "amazing anamorphic lens" engulfing audiences "in the panoramic range of an underwater world." These sentiments were echoed in Hollywood, where CinemaScope was hailed as the "Moses" that would lead the film industry "out of a film wilderness" ("CinemaScope" 1). In academia, André Bazin and Charles Barr heralded the technology as a groundbreaking aesthetic development that would hasten the end of montage editing techniques (Bazin; Barr 4). However, besides the potent demonstration of its new technological star, *Beneath the 12 Mile Reef*'s trailer also offers a telling dismissal of a competitive cinema technology, one that has been largely overlooked in favor of the possibilities ushered in by CinemaScope and other widescreen technologies. A title claims that CinemaScope is "The Modern Miracle You See without Special Glasses," a barbed jab at the polarized glasses audiences had to wear to view 3-D films. Often dismissed within modern film histories as a "transitory fad [. . .] [an] occasional novelty" (Thompson and Bordwell 379–80) that was "technically far from perfect [. . .] a gimmick" (Maltby and Craven 154), 3-D technology, as its presence in *Beneath the 12 Mile Reef*'s trailer suggests, was in 1953 a much more potent and popular technological option than later writers have allowed.

Rather than look at the 3-D films that were produced in 1953 and 1954, this article will explore the place of 3-D film technology by analyzing the trailers that were used to educate audiences about forthcoming attractions. Trailer study is useful here because it offers a unique perspective on what

MS THRILLING!"

An audience enjoys a movie in 3-D in the early 1950s. ***Photo courtesy of Photofest*****.**

has become a lost moment in film history. Contemporary discussions of 1950s 3-D technology are largely dismissive or are restricted to the mechanical properties of the different processes; in contrast, returning to original promotional texts such as trailers creates a deeper sense of how film studios talked to their audiences, used specific lures, and positioned technology as a prime attraction to get viewers back into theaters. Tracing the production of these trailers through original trailer scripts, studio files, and the trailers themselves uncovers subjects that have implications for the construction of film history in this period: the dominant 3-D aesthetic used to attract contemporary audiences; the link between 1950s technology and female sexuality; and, with the creation of "flat" (two-dimensional) trailers for use on television, the movement of visual imagery between film and television screens.

This article's attempt to recover this lost aspect of film history challenges the fact that 3-D has been overlooked in favor of widescreen, but it poses a particular historical challenge at the level of primary research. Most full 3-D trailer texts are not available in their original 3-D format, and few are archived or readily available to view: only two full 3-D trailers—for *It Came From Outer Space* (1953) and *The Maze* (1953)—are currently available, although there are flat trailers for almost all 3-D projects. Creating a timeline of 3-D trailer production for both film and television allows the article to identify which trailers were produced in 3-D, and analyzing the surviving 3-D trailers allows for the identification of conventions that can be sought in flat trailers. These, then, illuminate any nascent 3-D trailer aesthetics or structure.

Reconstructing these absent 3-D trailers is a necessary step for opening up this moment in film history and exploring the lost technological star of 3-D and its important place within both trailer and technological histories of the film industry. Between 1952 and 1955, Hollywood studios introduced a variety of cinema-specific technologies to coax audiences into movie theaters, using each technology as a weapon that turned the cinema screen itself into a site of difference. This was not simply a competition of film versus television but also one of studio versus studio and technology versus technology, each technology emphasizing new experiential qualities of size, depth, smell, hearing, or touch. Film trailers played key roles in attempts to display the unique attributes of each technology and to educate and excite audiences over the latest screen "improvement." While it may have been wedged between the wider screen innovations of Cinerama and CinemaScope,[1] 3-D remains an important moment in film history, as trailer study reveals.

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"Every THRILL . . . Comes Off the Screen . . . RIGHT AT YOU!"

> [The] new entertainment miracle, third dimension [. . .] makes the screen absolutely real and alive. People, objects, landscapes take on a depth, dimensions such as they have in real life. And it has an added quality—objects actually seem to come out of the screen. So real, they almost touch you. (*It Came from Outer Space,* trailer)

Actor Richard Carlson's words, spoken in the flat trailer for *It Came from Outer Space*, encapsulate many of the attractions that the new 3-D technology offered to audiences. His descriptions of the screen coming alive and his references to depth, reality, and objects coming out of the screen are repeated over and over in the 3-D trailers of 1953 and 1954 and encapsulate what these testimonials about 3-D offered as a technological "free sample"[2] (Crafton 120). The presentation of these elements creates a trailer aesthetic that foregrounds extreme 3-D moments, editing them together to create a narrative where technology is again a central star. The 1950s 3-D craze has been largely overlooked in film history, regarded as a dead end both aesthetically and technologically, but trailer evidence offers a compelling link between 3-D and other contemporary technologies. Visual content and competitive positioning are central aspects of 3-D trailers, particularly the use of experiential images and subjective point-of-view shots that highlight 3-D's technological aspects and echo technological rival Cinerama, which also foregrounds envelopment as a key audience lure. The genesis of a thematic link between 3-D and CinemaScope trailers can also be seen in the use of key footage to showcase the range of both technologies and in the suggestive sexual links that many of these trailers draw between the female form and the technological process. Through this analysis it becomes clear that 3-D was not a dead end but a crucial bridging step in the development of 1950s technology trailer conventions.

Trailer production to promote 3-D went through three distinct stages between 1952 and 1955: from flat trailers ("flat" here refers to standard film projection, with no 3-D element) to full 3-D trailer advertising that requires 3-D glasses for viewing, and then back to flat trailers that offer little or no technological sales message but focus on more generic or star-based sales messages. The historical and technological grounds for the rise and fall of 3-D trailers are explored below, but analysis of the 3-D trailer aesthetic involves a consideration of the "absent" text. Trailers for 3-D films were produced from the very beginning, but there is an important visual absence that complicates any modern attempt to view and understand them: only two trailers are currently available in their full 3-D format, with many others only surviving in their flat versions. The absence in the majority of these trailer texts is the 3-D image itself—the visual display of the technology. The following analyses will offer a series of ways to deal with this absence: those 3-D trailers that exist in their entirety and can be viewed in

three dimensions will be regarded as potential templates for the placement of 3-D imagery; these aesthetic conventions will be defined and applied to flat trailers for signs of absent 3-D footage; original trailer scripts will be used to differentiate between flat and 3-D previews; and the network of influences that surround and infuse the trailer texts will be interrogated for additional historical or industrial information. This approach will investigate the place of 3-D footage in the trailers, explore their attempt to create an active audience, and consider how 3-D technology was positioned against competing processes.

One of the few original trailers to survive in its full 3-D form is for the movie *It Came from Outer Space*. After a short series of titles, the trailer opens with a "Master of Ceremonies" segment that features Carlson, who plays the film's main character, John Putnam, set against a shadowy desert landscape. The camera tracks forward, framing him in a medium shot and allowing his 3-D image to loom out of the screen, the desert receding into the background: "Ladies and gentlemen, the events that I'm about to describe may sound incredible to most people—but I know they happened. I saw them happen." Carlson (in character) controls the first half of the trailer, speaking over a series of 3-D images that showcase the technology and that, after his narration ends, continue his story of alien invasion through excerpted scenes and title work. The Master of Ceremonies functions as part of the story: the trailer narrative is included within the film's diegesis, the world in which its events occur, and the main character offers the audience access to the story world, "including" them through his address and use of 3-D. The trailer makes no specific mention of the technology that makes Carlson's 3-D appearance possible, but the footage showcases the additional depth given to the screen. By comparison, the surviving flat trailer for the same film has Carlson in the same location, but as "himself," offering audiences an explanation of 3-D. Rather than placing viewers "inside" the story, as the 3-D trailer does, the flat trailer excludes audiences, offering a non-diegetic Master of Ceremonies who provides production knowledge, rather than access to the story world. The technology available for the two kinds of trailers creates two distinct sales messages: (1) a 3-D message based on narrative and envelopment; and (2) a flat message based on a lack of 3-D, which describes the technology to lure audiences to their local 3-D theater so that they too can be "active," included in the story world.

The use of 3-D footage in the *It Came from Outer Space* trailer offers a further comparison with the film's flat trailer: the latter is hyperbolic while the 3-D version is restrained, using its display of 3-D technology to sell the process and its effectiveness. The 3-D trailer offers a series of 3-D images: gimmick-laden moments of objects being thrown at the screen alongside a more subtle demonstration of the possibilities offered by depth photography. These illustrate Carlson's comment that the film shows people, landscapes, and objects in dimensions similar to real life. This aspect of the trailer is established early on: after Carlson's introduction, the trailer cuts to a fireball streaking right to left across the sky, above a set of trees, which are distinct (and on a different "level") from the desert in front and mountains beyond. Later, Carlson is shown peering through a hexagonal hole in the side of the spaceship. Shot from inside the ship, with its interior in the foreground, Carlson hovering in a midground, and the landscape far back in the distance, the scene offers different levels within the image. We then get Carlson's view into the ship. He sees a long cavernous space and a distant room full of stars and planets. The camera tracks forward, so that the room looms toward the camera and becomes a clearer, more defined, and more rounded image. At the end of Carlson's narration, there is an effective sense of depth in a point-of-view shot of the alien walking behind Carlson and Barbara Rush, who plays Ellen Fields in the film. As Carlson and Rush walk by two large rocks, the rocks extend out of the screen and then pass off-screen. Carlson moves forward, so that he recedes a little, and Rush becomes the main focus of the image—just as a wispy hand reaches out to touch her shoulder. Here, as well as emphasizing depth, the spatial dimensions of the screen also allow the trailer to reinforce character and narrative information: Rush's position, literally between the human Carlson and the unseen alien, presages the later takeover of her body by the aliens (seen later in the trailer). Layering 3-D images in this way can also be seen in the trailer for *The Maze*. Actress Veronica Hurst, who plays Kitty Murray in the film, claws her way through a series of huge cobwebs, each set at a different depth from the others. The use of 3-D makes her passage through the webs (and toward the camera) elongated and suspenseful. Here, the 3-D footage offers genre information by combining technologically innovative visuals with a classic horror image. In both trailers, these images highlight the ability of 3-D to give the illusion of a real space on screen.

Such scenes work to place characters and locations in their own 3-D "space," as when they stress Carlson's "real life" dimensions, but the 3-D trailer aesthetic also features a more overt demonstration: the "coming out of the screen" possibility of 3-D technology. There are two occasions of this in *It Came from*

A poster promotes the sexier side of 3-D.

Touting the new 3-D technology in a poster for *It Came from Outer Space*.

Outer Space's trailer: pieces of rock tumble down a cliff straight "into" the camera (these include several special effects rocks that bounce toward the audience), and Rush's character fires two ray blasts from a long wand at the audience. These are the strongest uses of visual spectacle in the trailer, demonstrating the gimmick of 3-D filmmaking rather than the more composed sense of depth and character placement that the earlier scenes focused on. *The Maze* trailer also uses its presentation of objects coming out of the screen for shock value—Carlson, who plays the main character of this movie, too, jabs his hand forward toward the viewer, noting and illustrating that "something from the great beyond reaches right out of the screen at you"—but also to reinforce genre staples, with shots of vampire bats flying "into" the camera punctuating the trailer.

Besides using existing 3-D visuals from the feature or specially filmed for the trailer, these 3-D previews also use graphic titles to demonstrate the new depth of the screen. *It Came from Outer Space*'s trailer has fewer screen-filling titles than other 3-D trailers, but the quality and use of its 3-D footage sells the process more effectively through demonstration. The trailer opens with one hyperbolic title claim about 3-D, but titles are more commonly used here to sell narrative events: "Sights human eyes have never seen [. . .] one of the most suspenseful stories ever filmed." The actual content of the titles is not as important as the way the titles emphasize the display of 3-D technology. In trailers for the widescreen technologies Cinerama and CinemaScope, titles literally stretch across the screen, underlining the wider screen by filling it. In the 3-D trailers for *It Came from Outer Space* and *The Maze*, the words seem to float above the screen, distinct from the scenes they overlay, as though the viewer could look around and behind them to see the image they are superimposed above. The words themselves may be exclamatory, but their use of 3-D imagery relates more to the subtle use of depth photography than the shock of "coming at you" examples.

The visual evidence of these two trailers shows that a strong 3-D aesthetic was promoted through trailer advertising. The test of the hypothesis presented here—that the elements of an active screen, objects being thrust at the viewer, and an attempt to create a more realistic image formed the basic conventions of the 3-D trailer—would be to look for these conventions in other trailers from the 1953–54 3-D boom. Although the absence of other 3-D trailers makes this project difficult, analysis of the existing flat trailers (particularly the placement of potential 3-D imagery) and their network of influences may offer a partial solution. The ability to distinguish between 3-D and flat trailers is aided by historical information from trailer scripts and the early trailers. The first 3-D feature to debut in the 1950s was produced outside the Hollywood studio system. *Bwana Devil* (1952) was described as "a feature picture [. . .] that any exhibitor with two machines in his booth can exhibit in full three-dimension" (Weaver 35). The key phrase is "any exhibitor with two machines": like its rival, Cinerama, 3-D used multiple projectors to create its on-screen image. The dual success of Cinerama and 3-D—both attempts to expand the appeal of the cinema screen through technology that changed the dimensions of the screen—convinced Hollywood studios to jump onto the 3-D bandwagon while it was still financially successful. Existing projects were transformed into 3-D films in the race to be first onto cinema screens, and it is this rush to be first that lies behind the initial phase of flat trailers. The trailer for *Bwana Devil* did not contain any 3-D footage, no free sample of the technology: the studio was desperate to sell the technology as a star but unable to demonstrate the appeal of that star.

The setup of the projection system created the initial problems: 3-D projection required two projectors, running simultaneously, showing two strips of film (left and right eye images) that had to be completely synchronized to create the 3-D effect. Intermissions were needed to change reels (since most theaters only had two projectors, which would normally run in succession, not simultaneously), increasing the length of the screening. In early- to mid-1953, theaters displayed slides informing audiences of intermissions to change projectors or warn them when in the program to put on their glasses. As with Cinerama, the effect of the wider

or deeper screen was considered paramount, and 3-D trailers ran the risk of lessening the impact[3] of the technology. Flat trailers from this time period can be identified by the level of rhetoric in titles and voice-over; they centered 3-D technology in the sales message but were unable to display it. The *House of Wax* (1953) trailer exclaims that the movie is the "first feature production by a major studio in 3 DIMENSION," but despite titles like "Every THRILL Of Its Story Comes OFF The Screen RIGHT AT YOU," the trailer remains a two-dimensional experience. The use of exaggerated language suggests the trailer's status as an early flat trailer, but it also creates strong links between the nascent technology and its main widescreen rival, Cinerama. Titles such as "YOU probe into the screaming terror / YOU are engulfed in its mysteries / YOU actually sense its chilling menace [. . .] its evil touches YOU!" are reminiscent of Cinerama's claims of envelopment and the active audience. The repetition of "YOU" in such trailers places interaction at the core of this technological sales message and recalls the promotion of Cinerama: "You won't be gazing at a movie screen—you'll find yourself swept right into the picture" (Belton 98).

The move from flat to full 3-D trailers can be traced to the middle of 1953 and lasted until 1954, when studios began to phase out their 3-D projects. Although a firm timeline cannot be established for the beginning of 3-D trailer production, the existence of the trailer for *The Maze* (released in July 1953), original trailer scripts, and the network of other three-dimensional elements of the "theatrical program"[4] suggest a mid-1953 date. Newsreels, short subjects, cartoons (including animated stars Popeye, Tom and Jerry, and Bugs Bunny), and advertising films were all being shown in 3-D by the second half of the year ("Theatre" 15). Even theater lobbies entered the third dimension: trailer company National Screen and toy manufacturer ViewMaster issued "movie preview reels [. . .] to promote the release of several 3-D and 'flat' movies" that were shown in special lobby display units to allow "movie-goers to preview the film with realistic 3-D pictures" (Van Beydler). Given that the entire theatrical experience was becoming 3-D, it seems likely that most trailers for 3-D films from mid-1953 on would have been produced in 3-D, alongside flat versions produced to promote the technology in cinemas that had yet to convert. Proof of this last point comes from the Universal and MGM trailer script archives, with annotations that note "3-D version" or "flat version" and often use the same script and imagery in both. This, of course, only confuses the issue of which trailer has survived,[5] but given that 3-D and flat versions used the same imagery, it is possible to imagine the absent 3-D version even when only the flat version remains.

Among the remaining thirty or so trailers from this period, certain patterns occur in structure, apparent use of faux 3-D imagery, and style. The Master of Ceremonies figure appears in several trailers, but the general resurgence of this trailer style in movie and television promotion in the 1950s, alongside its use in distinctly different flat and 3-D trailers for the same project (such as the *It Came from Outer Space* example discussed above), reduce the likelihood that this was a specific 3-D convention. Of the three conventions identified from the existing 3-D trailers, the use of graphic title design remains impossible to judge based purely on the archived flat trailers[6]. However, the two other elements—a sense of "real" dimensions on screen and objects thrusting into the camera—are potentially visible in other trailer texts. The use of layered depth photography is difficult to judge based on the trailers and scripts available; the nuances of character placement within landscape are often too subtle to spot in the flat versions. It seems likely that 3-D photography in an ambush scene in the trailer for *Taza, Son of Cochise* (1954) would have isolated and accentuated the Indian figures in foreground and background and created tension around the soldiers caught between them; equally, in the *Jesse James vs. the Daltons* (1954) trailer a long shot through a noose in the foreground as a lynching party approaches in the background suggests that 3-D composition was still central to sales messages. Objects being rammed toward the camera are more overt in these potential 3-D trailers: from flaming torches in *Drums of Tahiti* (1954), spears in *Jivaro* (1954), harpoon guns firing in *Creature from the Black Lagoon* (1954), to people being thrown over the camera in *Hondo* (1953), trailers are full of examples of possible 3-D effects. Trailer scripts from the Universal-International script archive make clear that these elements are important structural cues: scripts for trailers for *Creature from the Black Lagoon* and *Revenge of the Creature* (1955) reiterate scene choices that focus on 3-D visuals: "monster swimming towards camera," "swimmer shooting harpoon into camera," "crowd running towards camera," and "monster walking forward with girl." Although the existence of 3-D in these trailers must remain conjecture, it is clear that 3-D technology played an important role in these trailers: the display of 3-D footage was central to the sales message, and it turned the technology itself into a star.

There is another specific (and highly suggestive) absence that this list of potential 3-D images does not contain: the link between the technology and its presentation of the female body. This association appears in 3-D poster and trailer advertising, but the surviving 3-D trailer texts cannot fully illuminate the extent to which this relationship was visually expressed through a 3-D aesthetic. During 1954, as studios shifted production away from 3-D toward the increasingly dominant CinemaScope process, advertising for films such as *Kiss Me Kate* (1953) and *Dial M For Murder* (1954) became flat again, reverting to genre and star-based trailer narratives rather

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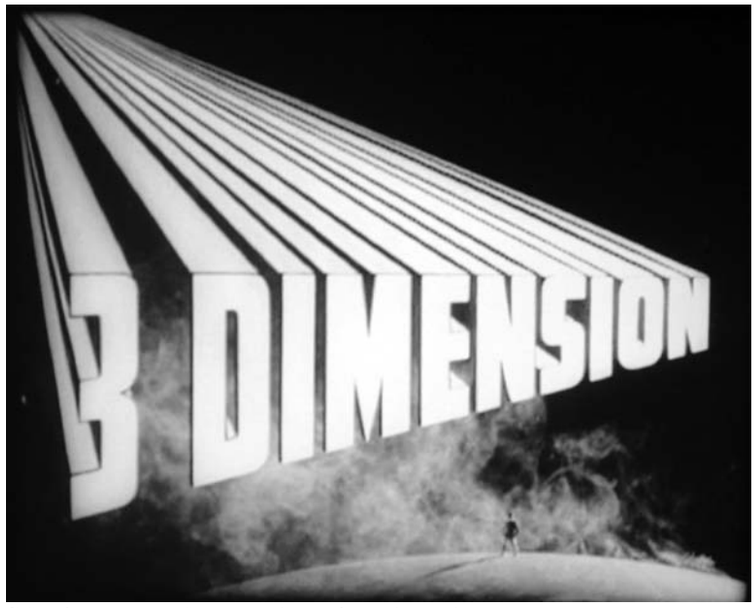
than focusing on technology. One of the last studio features to be released in 3-D was the Jane Russell vehicle *The French Line* (1954). Its trailer, originally produced in 3-D, only exists in a flat version, but poster advertising makes clear what the film's important 3-D attributes are: "J. R. in 3-D [. . .] It'll knock both your eyes out!" Indeed, the flat trailer showcases several scenes with Russell dancing, strutting, jiggling, suggesting that she was the object that would thrust its way off the screen. Looking back through the available trailers, the link between 3-D technology and sexuality is overt, even from the earliest examples: the abstract images of sensuous female lips and feminine shadows in the flat trailer for *House of Wax* and a fascinating display of masculine and feminine roles in the flat trailer for *Sangaree* (1953).

After some introductory titles, the *Sangaree* trailer cuts to a long shot of a screen-filling red curtain. The male voice-over repeats the film's name, then announces that "beautiful Arlene Dahl [. . .] [will] tell you all about it." Female voice-overs were almost unheard of in trailers, and the female presence was most often reduced to glamorous images in excerpted scenes or close-ups, so the appearance of Dahl and her apparent control of the sales message feels revolutionary. That feeling does not last. Dahl appears and talks about how exciting it was to make the film, but she says that the story is so big she will have to ask her (male) costar, Fernando Lamas, to help explain 3-D. As Lamas appears, Dahl turns to him: "Fernando, we have quite a problem. Just how are we going to show these people how wonderful *Sangaree* looks in third dimension?" The suggestion here is that the actress cannot explain anything technologically advanced, but that the actor will be able to through his technological expertise. However, the following exchange, as Dahl stands demurely to one side while her male costar explains 3-D, foregrounds 3-D's potential for displaying sexuality, particularly the 3-D glory of the female form. Given that this flat trailer is unable to actually exhibit 3-D visuals, Lamas attempts to demonstrate the point by describing a flat screen and waving his hand horizontally in front of him; for length, he pulls his hands apart horizontally; for height, he raises one hand vertically, palm down; and then, for "the most interesting thing . . . depth," he makes a circular motion with his hands, as though describing the shape of a sphere. "Now, let me tell you about depth . . . depth is . . . uh . . . well . . . eh." The reason he is having so much trouble is that he can't take his eyes off Dahl's breasts, which his hands, still attempting to demonstrate depth, are emulating the shape of. Rather than one sphere, his hands momentarily cup two imaginary globes before sliding down in an imitation of an idealized female shape. Uncertain, he takes one last (long) look at Dahl, drops his hands to his sides, and says, "Uh . . . it's depth . . . I think you have to go and see it to understand." A reassuring smile from Dahl allows them to move on to talk about safer things, such as how epic a story it is. But that moment remains. Not only has Lamas failed in his masculine role—beginning with the trailer for *The Jazz Singer* (1927), men have always been the ones to educate and inform audiences of new developments—he also has linked 3-D to Dahl's chest, suggesting that this new technology is only useful because it will allow breasts to thrust their way off the screen.

Debates about the female form in cinema are clearly not new, but trailers add a fresh perspective on how closely linked technology and female sexuality were in this particular moment. This can be seen in other trailers, both flat and 3-D. Randolph Scott describes his *Stranger Wore a Gun* (1953) costar, Claire Trevor, as "three-D in any language"; *Those Redheads from Seattle*'s (1953) trailer opens with the three redheads in question high-kicking their way off the screen, petticoats flying around, with superimposed 3-D titles that exclaim, "THREE REDHEADS [. . .] IN THREE (WOW) DIMENSIONS"; the positioning of Rita Hayworth in the *Miss Sadie Thompson* (1953) trailer suggests that she was also 3-D in any language. It is difficult to state definitively how explicit this sexual link was, but the most common element in the available trailers (beyond the generic



Stills from the trailer to *It Came from Outer Space.*

"something is thrown at the camera") is the presentation of 3-D bodies, with the most common examples being either feminine or alien. Jane Russell, Rita Hayworth, Claire Trevor, and Arlene Dahl might have knocked both your eyes out, but their 3-D counterparts are not masculine heroes, but the Creature from the Black Lagoon, Robot Monster, and the aliens who Came from Outer Space. This use of titillation through technology suggests a contemporary (masculine) uncertainty over the female body, at once desirable and sexual but also alien and unknowable. Fernando Lamas's inability to talk about the mystery represented by a woman's body, and his need to fall back on the most basic visual cue, represents both the fear and excitement of such imagery. Yet the frustrating absence of full 3-D trailer texts means this imagery remains a potential aesthetic and thematic component, suggestive rather than definitive. Even in the trailer for *Cat Women of the Moon* (1953)—where alien monster and sexually charged female form are combined in the same body—the absence of a complete 3-D text means the only absent 3-D image that can be fully identified is a giant spider that lunges at the camera.

These details confirm that the lost history of 3-D trailers offers new revelations about how audiences in 1953 were made aware of this technological star, with structural and aesthetic elements that are unique to this contemporary historical moment. Three-dimensional trailers were designed to educate audiences through free samples of the central technology, but this extended beyond the gimmick of objects poking out of the screen. These trailers show a creative use of graphic titles and the layering of character and landscape to convey character and genre detail or add drama and tension to a key narrative moment. While the textual link between 3-D and the female body remains speculative, it corresponds to larger cultural anxieties of the time period. Reconstructing these lost trailers offers a way to re-examine the 3-D movement of the 1950s, to see moments of coherence across the largely incoherent production schedule and the scramble among studios and production companies to create new films in 3-D or widescreen. Trailer analysis reveals that 3-D was a bigger technological threat than critics generally acknowledge. But this technological star also extends beyond the cinema screen to the "rival screen" of television. As an essential part of this lost history of 3-D promotional materials, the final section of this article will consider whether flat television trailers mirrored the developments seen on the cinema screen.

The "Rival Screen": 3-D on Television

Earlier, the division of the surviving flat trailers into three distinct groups was based on their production status and the emerging timeline of 3-D production: (1) flat trailers rushed out to capitalize on the first 3-D films; (2) flat trailers that were also produced in 3-D; and (3) flat trailers produced after the main rush of 3-D production. There is a fourth element of flat trailer promotion for 3-D films, however: the nascent television trailers used to advertise these films on American television. Although none of these television spots have survived in any audiovisual form, archival evidence about the production and creation of television trailers remains. Like the work of writers such as Christopher Anderson and Su Holmes, analysis of these television trailers replaces the traditional notion of an antagonistic relationship between cinema and television with a more complex and multifaceted affiliation. Reconstructing the essential components of television trailers through original scripts from the Universal script archive and comparing them to film trailers expands the history of 3-D trailers into a new medium. As with flat film trailers, a technological sales message was built up without the ability to display a free sample of 3-D footage.

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Television trailers for film releases were not an overnight success in the United States. Although trailers existed as early as 1950, the bulk of the archival evidence suggests that they became more widespread in 1953, as evidenced by scripts for trailers for films such as *Abbott & Costello Go to Mars* (1953), *Jeopardy* (1953), and *The All American* (1953). The dominant feature of these television spots, despite experiments in direct address from celebrity figures and simple still images, is the use of excerpted scenes from the films. The television trailer for *Born Yesterday* (1950) uses specially shot medium images recorded on the set (Ames 6X), while the trailer for *Abbott & Costello Go to Mars* relies on a montage of close and medium-shot images taken from the film (the scripts list shot locations from the feature negative). From 1953 on, however, the technologies of 3-D, CinemaScope, and VistaVision complicated trailers' ability to use feature excerpts, given that the television screen could not show images in their full depth, width, sound quality, or color. Although 3-D, widescreen, stereophonic sound, and Technicolor have traditionally been seen as technologies designed to combat the rival screen of television, key television trailers for 3-D films actively embrace the new, smaller screen. In many ways, the television trailer flourished because of its relationship with new film technologies.

The television trailer scripts for *Wings of the Hawk* (1953) position their 3-D visuals in the foreground of the sales message. Descriptions of the visuals include "horses thundering towards camera [. . .] biggest explosion [. . .] machine-gun into camera." One of the strongest 3-D cinema trailer conventions—items coming out of the screen, aimed at the audience—is mirrored here, which reiterates the 3-D image as the trailer's core visual appeal. Yet these television trailers for 3-D movies are flat, and they offer no free sample of the 3-D visuals that enhance the thundering horses or machine gun fire. Given the prevalence of flat theatrical 3-D trailers,

the presence of faux 3-D footage in television trailers is not surprising, but its use suggests that the television spots were doing more than simply highlighting the most exciting images. The *Wings of the Hawk* campaign included two sixty-second and four twenty-second television spots, but instead of offering different angles on the film (which, if the viewer saw all six, would add up to a more complete picture), these commercials largely repeat the same visual information: the horses, the machine gun, explosions, and shots of stars Van Heflin and Julia Adams (apart from one distinct example, discussed below). Instead of building a larger framework for the feature, the television trailers remind audiences of the central 3-D visuals, a suggestion that they were intended to prompt cinemagoers to recall the same images from the 3-D theatrical trailer.

By centering on these visual cues, the television trailer highlights its own shortcomings, reminding viewers that it was unable to offer a free sample of the 3-D technology at the core of its sales message. Without the technology itself, the television trailers rely instead on the narrative voice-over to sell the technology. The language of the trailer scripts shows that their announcers used exaggeration, rather than intimacy: "A thousand new thrills in three dimension" (*Wings*, "3-D Adventure") or "a thrilling love story bristling with explosive action—amazingly alive in the magic of spectacular 3-dimension!" (*Wings*, "Sex"). There appears to be a dual purpose to these exclamations: without access to the technology, the scripts increase the volume and exaggerated claims of the 3-D-based sales message, but they also allow the film studios to differentiate the cinema screen from the television set, dismissing the small screen while relying on it to promote their products. This can be seen as early as the *Abbott & Costello Go to Mars* script, where the narrator states, "Life at home was *never* like this. The laughs at the movies were *never* so wild!" (emphasis in script). Although there is a narrative purpose to these words (Abbott and Costello are literally away from home, on Mars), this can be read as a suggestion that home life (watching television) is dull or unexciting, while the movies are wilder and more entertaining. The subtlety of such messages was reduced with the introduction of new technology and the insistence on the screen as a site of difference: the *Wings of the Hawk* script "Sex" exclaims that the only place to see this "3-dimension Technicolor triumph" is "on the full-sized theatre screen!" Such comments were not necessary for promotional purposes (the final few seconds of all television trailers were left silent for a local announcer to list cinema playdates), but they allowed the studios to differentiate the cinema screen from the television one. The comments seem to hint at the film industry's competition with television, but they occur in television trailers designed to utilize the broadcast technology and target the new mass audience of television. This contradiction points up one of the key issues of this period: the uncertainty of the studio response to television and their growing (though reluctant) reliance on the medium for box office success.

[T]he flexibility of the television trailer may have added to its longevity in the publicity field.

Promoting 3-D films in television trailers without access to 3-D footage was not a major technological hurdle in 1953–54. All 3-D films were in Academy ratio, many were in black and white, and audiences were used to faux 3-D effects because of their use in the flat cinema trailers discussed earlier. Excerpts could still focus attention on the 3-D moments, and the voice-over's 3-D specific messages reminded viewers of the technology. The lack of 3-D display may actually have worked in favor of the television trailer, particularly when the popularity of 3-D began to fade. In 1954, television spots for *Creature from the Black Lagoon* reduced the emphasis on the 3-D process, using visual excerpts from the movie to focus on genre characteristics, rather than technology. Many of the main technology-centric images in this trailer are obscured by screen-filling titles that sell stars and narrative action, reducing the impact of the faux 3-D shots. The sense that technology had been replaced by genre spectacle is made clear in one of the *Creature* television spots, where there is an option to drop the technology message completely. A notation states that the title, "the screen's first underwater three-d thrill," could be changed to "the most terrifying of all underwater adventures." The option of altering the sales message suggests that producers were aware of the fading appeal of 3-D, but it also highlights the ability of television trailers to respond to such changes. Because it did not offer a free sample of the technology, the content of the television spot was more fluid, able to adapt to changing circumstance, and replaceable on television screens at short notice. Unlike some American and British theaters, which were reluctant to change or adapt their cinemas to the new technologies, the flexibility of the television trailer may have added to its longevity in the publicity field.

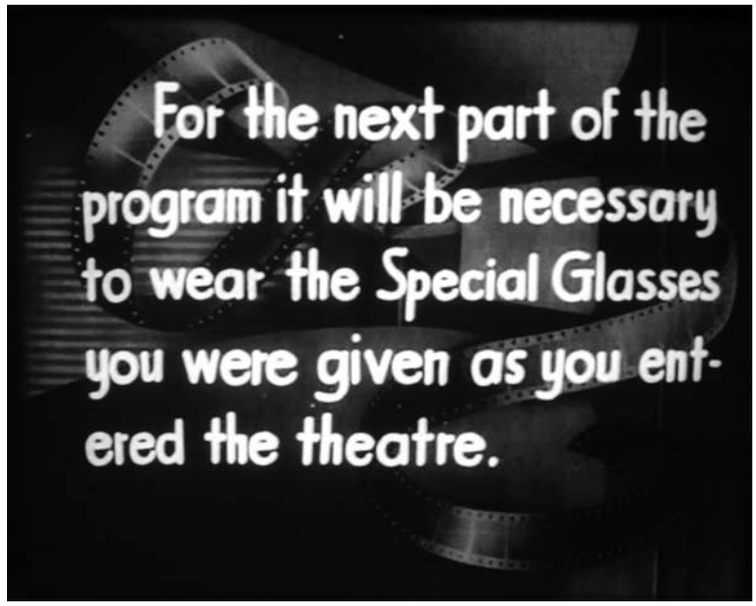
The suggestive link between 3-D technology and female sexuality identified in many 3-D film trailers can also be seen in one of the surviving television trailer scripts. Few of the television trailers from the early 1950s show any understanding of the possibilities of demographic targeting by producing different messages for different groups. But *Wings of the Hawk* television script number 2, "Sex," shows a nascent ability to offer a new sales angle. The script repeats the campaign's central message (that this is a 3-D action film) but adds in blatant sexual imagery. Excerpted visuals—"Jail bar kiss [. . .] Lane-Dolenz clinch showing bosom"—appear between the action-based images, and the voice-over links action, sex, and technology: "The 3-Dimension Theatre-screen pulses with danger—and desire [. . .] seductive Abbe Lane whose kisses branded her an outcast." Unlike the flat cinema trailer, which has some potential 3-D images within it, this television trailer was never designed to be seen in 3-D, but it still underlines the importance of the female body and the technology. The screen pulsing with danger and desire could be seen as hyperbole, but the focus on specific sexual imagery—particularly

Abbe Lane's bosom—extends the earlier link between female sexuality and 3-D beyond the cinema screen and onto the new medium of television.

The television trailers available for 3-D films of 1953 all emphasize the importance of screen technology, retaining the focus on 3-D as a technological attraction. They complicate existing notions of how the film and television industries worked together in the early 1950s, with potent textual evidence of how the film companies hoped to exploit the new medium for financial gain, even as they promoted products designed to challenge its growing dominance. The development of the television trailer beyond 1954 is beyond the scope of this article and its focus on 3-D, but it seems clear that advertising this cinema technology helped establish the viability of television trailers. Television spots further fill in this lost history, providing more instances of flat footage standing in for the absent 3-D image, of such excerpts being embellished with declamatory language, of key 3-D moments still being the focus, and of the connection between 3-D technology and female sexuality.

Conclusion

What then can this new perspective on a moment in film history tell us about the display of 3-D technology or the place of technology within the film industry of the early 1950s? Three-dimension itself has been dismissed[7] as a technology because of its 1950s failure to secure a steady audience. It is possible to see 3-D as a passing fad, a post-Cinerama attempt to engulf the audience that failed to see that the future was wider screens, not deeper ones. Close analysis of both of the surviving trailer texts and the historical context of their production reveals that 3-D trailers created their own distinct technological star. Taking the concepts of spectacle and audience envelopment from contemporary rival Cinerama, these 3-D trailers feature the strongest visual cues and the most prominent displays of the technology's attributes (most often the shock of an object breaking free of the screen), thus reasserting the need to use key, technologically created imagery for the heart of a trailer sales message. Unlike hybrid trailers of the 1930s and 1940s, which were largely produced from production off-cuts and B roll footage often without access to a completed cut of the film, these 3-D trailers show the necessity of using actual finished footage. In flat trailers, such as those for *House of Wax* or *Sangaree*, the absence of 3-D imagery forces the trailers to rely on colorful language and hybrid conventions based on genre and "star image"[8]; with the introduction of 3-D footage in trailers for *The Maze* and *It Came from Outer Space*, trailer structure shifts to feature important visual spectacles from the film. Three-dimensional trailers did not create this trailer convention—in the late 1920s, trailers for epics such as *Noah's Ark* (1929) used key special effects sequences as a structural conceit—but 3-D trailers redefined and popularized the use of technology in such structures.



Theater slides instruct the audience on the 3-D experience.

The reconstruction of this moment in film history reveals the important place that 3-D created for itself in 1953–54, especially in relation to the technologies of Cinerama and CinemaScope. Mirroring trailers for movies in Cinerama, 3-D trailers positioned envelopment and being "within" the image as central aspects of its technological star. The link between the female body and the 3-D image is also seen in CinemaScope trailers such as the one for *How to Marry a Millionaire* (1953), where Marilyn Monroe's body is draped horizontally across the wider screen while titles claim, "Only CinemaScope Can Do Justice to Monroe." Trailer analysis has revealed the importance of such technological star images in the early 1950s and the necessity of rooting such analysis in the network of cultural and industrial forces that impacted on trailer production: from cultural changes toward technology and American leisure activities to sexual attitudes in 1950s society and the competitive nature of Hollywood studios. Combining this textual and contextual knowledge offers unique

insights into Hollywood's attempt to revise the cinema screen of the 1950s and utilize the television screen for its own purposes. Three-dimension may have lost its potential for useful exploitation by early 1954, but for the six to nine months that its star burned brightest, it was a potent competitor for the rival technological processes, and its trailers reconfirmed the importance of a visual display by offering free samples of the technology being advertised. Although 3-D films and trailers have been lost or overlooked in traditional film histories, it might now be time to return to such lost texts. The search should be expanded to include promotional and publicity materials in order to reconstruct absent or missing texts and discover what else these contemporary products can reveal about the studio system, society, and technology of the 1950s.

NOTES

1. Cinerama's three-camera widescreen process was launched in 1952. CinemaScope debuted in late 1953, a commercial one-camera process designed in response to Cinerama's success.

2. The term "free sample" refers here to the idea that trailers offer audiences a "free" preview of the technology that is being promoted. The term was originally used by Crafton in his work on Vitaphone trailers of the 1920s.

3. There was a belief that the "shock" or impact of 3-D footage might be lessened if audiences saw "full" 3-D trailers before the main feature (a similar concern was specifically raised with Cinerama trailers but no other widescreen process).

4. The "theatrical program" is the full theatrical experience audiences would have in a movie theater: the program of short films, newsreels, cartoons, B films, advertising, main feature, etc.

5. Some of the trailers I refer to here are not available to watch and only exist as scripts. Those that have survived appear to be flat, mainly because 3-D trailers required two strips of film to create the illusion of three dimensions. But studio archiving policies in relation to 3-D could mean that these "flat" trailers are actually one half of an original 3-D trailer.

6. Only *The Maze* and *It Came from Outer Space* exist as full 3-D trailers. Therefore, the flat or potential 3-D trailers look the same—particularly when it comes to the titles, which may have "loomed" offscreen. But it is impossible to tell from what remains in the archive. Although we popularly imagine 3-D to have separate red and green images, this basic anaglyphic technology was not used in 3-D filmmaking, which largely used a Polaroid process that looks like normal film but is split into left and right images.

7. This perspective is not helped by the failure of attempts to revive the technology: 3-D and pornography in *The Stewardess* (1969), 3-D and horror in *Jaws 3-D* (1983), and *Friday the 13th Part III* (1982). More recently, digital 3-D technology has been used in *Spy Kids 3-D: Game Over* (2003), *Beowulf* (2007), and 3-D sequences in IMAX versions of *Superman Returns* (2006) and *Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix* (2007). Given the support of James Cameron, George Lucas, and Steven Spielberg, this latest attempt to add depth to the cinema screen may yet succeed where the others have failed.

8. "Star image" refers to the production and promotion of a particular star persona.

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