



# BUZZ HAYS

## SONY STUDIOS PIONEER

BY JUDY SECKLER

Buzz Hays, senior vice president of the Sony 3D Technology Center, lives up to his name. His passion for film began when he and his mother went to see *House of Wax*, and it's hardly wavered. "I was totally hooked," Hays recalls. "You get the glasses and it's an event."

Except for two weeks out of the year and holidays, the center, funded by Sony Pictures Studios, is a steady parade of the city's film professionals. The center includes a lecture room and a generous soundstage with a few imposing 3D cameras hooked up to large computer monitors that help line up shots. Here the students attend a three-day workshop to understand the

science of how stereoscopic 3D is captured in the camera.

In 2D filmmaking, objects and actors may be different sizes in a frame but they are always at the same distance from the viewer. In normal seeing, a viewer's eyes lock on an object at a point of convergence. In 3D, it's possible to move subjects of interest toward or away from the viewer.

A combination of factors allows this to happen: two camera lenses that simultaneously capture scenes from the left eye and right eye, the distance between the two lenses, varying viewer distance, image brightness, finding the viewer comfort zone and making technical adjustments to accommodate different size screens. A lot of technical decisions made

during the filming of a movie, if well done, appear seamless to the audience.

At the 3D Technology Center, students familiarize themselves with 3D equipment and overcome fear and resistance during the shooting of individual scenes. The instructors topple misconceptions about the 3D process and make students aware of what adjustments can be made during filming or afterward in post-production. A major benefit of the lab has been providing accessibility to camera rigs in a low-pressure environment.

A turning point for the film industry was the release of James Cameron's *Avatar*. "The amazing virtual world Cameron created gave 3D greater credibility," says Grant Anderson, the center's stereoscopic supervisor. The film was shot with 3D cameras instead of being converted in post-production, as well as using CG.

The center's goal is to encourage the high-quality use of 3D by shifting away from 3D's previous novelty identity to its rebirth as an experience that can be perceived

some involving DVD format, is a leader in promoting new entertainment technologies that give audiences greater visceral experiences. Hays, previously a senior producer and founder of Sony Imageworks, worked under Cookson converting feature films to IMAX 3D and Real D.

Throughout his career, Hays has been a pied piper of visual effects. He's worked alongside Robert Zemeckis in adapting the filmmaker's *Beowulf*, co-founded TriBeCa Interactive with Robert De Niro and was in charge of all the research and development involving THX Sound System and Home THX as George Lucas' director of engineering at Lucasfilm THX. He also worked on countless visual effects for music videos and broadcast commercials worldwide, served as an executive producer on numerous feature title sequences and co-produced the independent film *Swimming with Sharks*.

For now, Hays has his work cut out for him. Seasoned professionals and young filmmakers are both curious and skeptical about the new tool. He says that the



as an extension of the real world.

Chris Cookson, president of Sony Pictures Technologies, was instrumental in creating the Sony 3D Technology Center, opened in February 2010. Cookson, who holds more than 30 US patents,

letters and feedback he gets, such as, "I'm excited about the creative possibilities, having those *aha* moments," give him confidence in the future of 3D. □

(Pictured): Top, Buzz Hays. Bottom, Sony 3D Technology Center in action.