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'Sanctum' Hits the Road

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Sanctum is a Universal thriller set in the world of underwater caves. It's exec produced by **James Cameron** and in 3D.

It is not some IMAX 3D companion piece to Cameron's underwater documentary *Ghost of the Abyss* or *Aliens of the Deep*.

But that is what some people think.

Universal knows it has a marketing challenge on its hands (the R rating and the Australian cast isn't helping either) so it's taking its message to the streets, literally. Yesterday it kicked off the *Sanctum 3D Mobile Experience*, which consists of a tricked-out semi-truck trailer that converts into a 91-seat 3D screening room which will show the 3D scenes from the movie.

Cameron, director **Alister Grierson** and writer-producer **Andrew Wight** (who produced all of Cameron's IMAX 3D movies) were on hand for the kick-off, which will see the roadshow hit CES in Las Vegas this weekend before going on to Phoenix, Austin, Dallas, New Orleans, Atlanta, Winston-Salem, Raleigh and Miami, among other cities (check *Sanctum*'s Facebook page for details on the stops). The tour wraps up at Universal Orlando on Feb. 6.

The movie touts itself as being the next evolution in 3D, but it doesn't mean it's got some new doohickey up its sleeve. It simply means that instead of being a tentpole epic ... in 3D, it's a modestly-budgeted thriller ... in 3D.

And that was the appeal to Cameron, who was making *Avatar* in new Zealand when he first heard about the project; he wanted to see how 3D would impact a smaller-scaled movie. (Being the only A-lister associated with the movie, Cameron took the brunt of the questions.)

Sanctum, inspired by events experienced by Wight back in 1988, is an Australian production that tells the tale of a group of adventurers exploring a large cave system when a tropical storm hits and, cut off from help, they must fight to survive.

But smaller didn't mean easier as Cameron said the movie was considerably more challenging than *Avatar*. The 3D filmmaking, which requires two cameras and larger teams, took place underwater, on the water, in tighter quarters and used more handheld cameras than anything he attempted in *Avatar*.

He also backed up the filmmakers who said 3D was the least of their concerns when making the physically-demanding movie that had actors in harnesses jumping from cables or breathing underwater, something Cameron didn't even try to do in *The Abyss*.

3D is better suited for something like *Sanctum* than *Avatar*, Cameron even said.

"*Avatar* had many broad vistas, if you will, that the difference in watching the movie in 2D and 3D is not that great because the more expansive the image, the less you feel in close contact with objects and characters and so on.

"It's the intimate scenes in *Avatar* ... that were really effective in 3D. So we knew that going in. But the difference between experiencing *Sanctum* in 2D and *Sanctum* in 3D is greater. 3D will constantly be informing you with the sense of claustrophobia. 3D works best in small spaces," he said.

Cameron took the opportunity to expound on the ongoing rise of 3D, saying it still had many thresholds to hit.

"When the consumer electronics manufacturers bring to market sets that don't require glasses, at that point it's going to explode like crazy," he said. He added the growth is still in gear, pointing to, and the company he formed when creating the Cameron/Pace Fusion 3D Camera System for *Avatar*, is expanding quicker than he thought and is expected to build hundreds of cameras systems in the next year to meet demand.

"People love to grumble about 3D: conversion has hurt it, it's a flash in the pan, the market is retreating. It's all bull. There were some dips but they were dips in the growth curve. It never stopped growing," he said.

Here are the sequences being shown:

1) In a lush tropical setting, actors **Alice Parkinson** and **Rhys Wakefield** repel off a cliff down to the massive hole in the Earth while **Ioann Gruffudd** makes a bet he can get there faster then them, jumping off and parachuted down.

2) Trapped in the cave system, members of the expedition try to climb from one level to another as water gushes with deadly force, eventually knocking a boulder loose and causing a duo to tumble down into the water.