



BY AMY SPIEZIO

# 3D EYEWEAR: OPTICAL'S NEW WAVE

**Getting your dispensary ready for the next-generation option in multiple-pair sales**

3D models now include limited editions, such as Converse glow-in-the-dark styles from REM Eyewear and sleek models from Gunnar Optiks



**T**oday, optical has a front-row seat for the next big thing in entertainment technology: 3D. The production of 3D eyewear has come a long way from blue and red anaglyph lenses in paper frames, but is the new product category worth the price of admission?

#### JUMPING INTO THE GAME

If there was a starting gun for 3D eyewear sales, it would be going off now. More movies than ever are being produced in 3D, and

this month's Consumer Electronics Show (CES) is expected to feature the announcement of new product launches of 3D televisions for the home. A handful of optical manufacturers, including Marchon, Oakley, and Gunnar Optiks, were on hand at CES to pitch their passive 3D eyewear (see sidebar p. 60) options that support the technology.

"There's a tremendous opportunity to bring another level of business to ECPs—selling 3D glasses," says Marchon's vice president of new business development, Hannah Sarbin. "It's a great marketing message, and it brings new sexiness and new life and a new story into the practice."



Options for 3D eyewear include looks from ck Calvin Klein from Marchon, which is 3D eyewear and photochromic sunglasses

## BUYER PROFILE

One of the first practices to put in a big order for Marchon 3D eyewear, Advanced Vision Care in Tucson, Ariz., is breaking new ground. Tom Sauer, optical manager/optician says, "It's staying ahead of the curve. We're cutting edge on everything."

Although 3D television options are out of the price range of the entry-level consumer, the movie business is diving into the 3D. "We didn't do it because we thought 3D was going to be the greatest. But 3D movies are making \$3 to \$7 more per customer. Why would you just want to watch the profits go by that could have been?" Sauer says.

Getting into the 3D eyewear market early may help ensure future sales in the category. "ECPs should start to get into eyewear for passive 3D right now, but they should understand that it's for the movies. Then when the TVs come around, they will have a good education on 3D," suggests Kieran Hardy, president/CEO of Live Eyewear.

### PRODUCT PLANNING

Once you've decided to step into the 3D eyewear arena, it's time to consider your inventory. With booming product development, this small segment has a wide range of options. Important considerations include a generous lens size in the A and B measurements.

is there a market for 3D eyewear? Absolutely. In fact, there are many markets for it. **FIRST MARKET:** Early adopters and techno geeks. "Initially it will be someone specifically drawn to the 3D aspect, the early adaptors," says Marchon's vice president of new business development, Hannah Sarbin.

**WHERE THE BOYS ARE:** "Men are the main buyers of 3D eyewear right now," says Douglass Rees, manager of the lobby O Store at Oakley's corporate headquarters. "It's kind of a guy thing at first, a gadget and something that's making your movie experience more amazing."

**JUST KIDDING:** Those in their mid 20s to mid 30s are expected to be the first wave of consumers. "Some of the older people think 3D is just a fad because it was before. The younger people see it as more of a staple that can enhance movies in general," Rees says.

**THE BIG PICTURE:** Movie buffs will be willing to invest in their comfort and visual performance with their own pair of 3D eyewear, and that group crosses demographic lines. "That's the thing about movie buffs, they come in all ages, all demographics," says Tom Sauer, optical manager/optician at Advanced Vision Care in Tucson, Ariz.

Style-wise, licensed brands including Nautica and Calvin Klein have hit the market. In addition, Oakley is using popular sun styles for its 3D offerings. "Our inline product sells really well and performs really great on your face," says Oakley CEO Colin Baden.

■ **SUNGLASS/3D CROSSOVER.** The sunglass and 3D hybrid launched by Marchon 3D features circular polarization and photochromic lenses for screen and street use.

"They can approach the sale in two ways, this is a sunglass that has 3D technology or to a technology person this is the best quality, most comfortable 3D glass," Sarbin says.

Light transmission for the eyewear

is 10 to 12 percent, and the lenses have a light tint that darkens when exposed to UV. "The shortest message is to say it's a 3D sunglass or it's a 3D glass and a sunglass all in one."

■ **STRICTLY 3D.** Circular polarization 3D won't block glare, so some 3D eyewear makers, including Oakley, are marketing it specifically as a non-sunglass.

"They can buy the 3D eyewear and they aren't UV protectant. It's a completely different frame," says Douglass Rees, manager of the O Store at Oakley's corporate headquarters in Foothill Ranch, Calif.

■ **OVER RX.** Wearing 3D eyewear over prescription eyewear is a solution to comfort and clear vision



**OverRx options from Live Eyewear and clips work with regular eyewear**

for prescription-wearing movie goers.

The wrap shape of overRx eyewear can also improve the viewing experience. "They feature very dark side shields, so there's no ambient light coming in," Hardy says.

■ **CLIPS.** High-end manufacturer Tom Davies is offering a clip-on 3D adapter for ophthalmic eyewear. Clips are also on the way from other frame companies. "We will be launching clip styles. That's going to be really critical to those who need Rx eyewear," Sarbin predicts.

■ **RX 3D.** Prescription 3D eyewear adds several levels of complexity to the lens creation process. But research is well underway and several manufacturers report that they are expected to launch in the spring.

■ **CHANGING LENSES.** In 2011, Oakley's Colin Baden says the company will begin production of

eyewear with interchangeable lenses suitable for Rx, sun, and 3D.

### **GIMMICK OR GOLD MINE?**

The 3D entertainment market is growing by leaps and bounds with new technological advancements popping up every day. As a result, the shelf life of 3D eyewear is a definite concern.

The general consensus among optical manufacturers is that 3D eyewear will be a player for at least a decade. "In 10 to 15 years, no glasses will be needed. But right now, theaters have invested in the technology and they aren't going to change," Baden says.

As an accessory, 3D eyewear provides a way for eyecare practitioners to meet a new patient need while developing a new revenue stream that is worthwhile despite a limited shelf life. "Even five years is a long time. We're selling \$1,000 glasses for a year," Sauer says. "There's no point in not going with something because in the future something better might come out."

## **SETTING UP SHOP**

Adding 3D to a practice requires a dedicated space and eye-catching, information-providing displays to help drum up interest without adding extra sales labor. To make 3D work for you, create a display that does the heavy lifting.

"There's only so many things an optician can do. A lot of people go to the movies, and if they go to the eye doctor and see a poster about 3D eyewear, it will get the ball rolling," says Kieran Hardy, president/CEO of Live Eyewear.

A separate space away from sunglasses will help promote the product. "You should make noise about it and not let it blend into your sunglasses," says Hannah Sarbin, vice president of new business development at Marchon Eyewear. "We are shipping out displays with lenticulars and it is a graphic that already has a lot of depth. We also believe that it's important to have another way to demo, whether it's a 3D laptop or 3D monitors." Marchon 3D offers a full P.O.P. display with pieces allowing for window and dispensary displays.

Showing the product at work is key, and thanks to new product releases, smaller and more affordable 3D televisions are entering the market. "We are getting 3D televisions in the lobby," says Douglass Rees, manager, O Store, Foothill Ranch, Calif.

## **3D TECH**

One of the first steps in successfully dispensing 3D eyewear is understanding the technology. 3D images are created using cameras with two lenses that duplicate the eyes. The combined stereoscopic image is synchronized, resulting in a 3D effect.

**ACTIVE 3D GLASSES** require a power source to work effectively. Shutter glasses' LCD lenses receive commands to open and shut to display different images to each eye.

**CIRCULAR POLARIZERS** align light waves to rotate either clockwise or counterclockwise as they move toward and away from the screen. They are known for undisturbed viewing and stability during head and body movements.

**LINEAR POLARIZERS** use vertical polarization in one lens and horizontal polarization in the other. Head or body movement may disturb 3D image focus.

**PASSIVE 3D GLASSES** don't require a power source for 3D viewing. Anaglyph and polarized 3D lenses, currently the most common 3D glasses, are considered passive, since they don't need a power source to view 3D content.

**THEATERS AND SCREENS:** Currently, IMAX theaters use linear passive polarized glasses, Dolby 3D Digital Cinema uses a passive filter, and RealD 3D cinemas use circular polarization.

Most 3D-capable televisions, laptops, and monitors are expected to use circular polarization.

— Karlen McLean, ABOC, NCLC

Unlike other short-lived products, some say 3D eyewear has staying power. "This is not just a gimmick or something else we can sell. It has a purpose," says Rees.

A true advantage of adding 3D eyewear inventory is that ECPs are uniquely qualified to sell it. Baden says, "That community is the only one who has the experience to sell it. The big boxes just can't do it." **EB**