

Taking cinema into the next dimension

With the recent opening of the first 6D cinema and 7D videogame in the UAE, *Rob Garratt* finds out if this is the future of moviemaking

A Tyrannosaurus Rex leans its scaly head out of the screen. I feel a chilly gust of air brush against my cheeks as the dinosaur gnarls its teeth hungrily. The beast opens its jaw and leans in for the kill – it's a close cut, close enough that I feel a splash of dino saliva on my face – but then suddenly my chair jerks abruptly to the right and I'm off, juddering through the prehistoric jungle in a 4x4, leaping over ravines and dashing between brontosaurus legs. This, I'm told, is the future of cinema.

Arriving at what's been billed as Dubai's first '6D cinema' is quite underwhelming at first. Rather than a sprawling multiplex, it's a tiny room attached to a shopping centre coffee shop. Peeking inside, there's a row of just four seats and they're bright pink. A toddler's walk in the park, I think. How wrong I was. As I don my 3D glasses and buckle up, the platform below my feet slides away, leaving my legs dangling as though on a rollercoaster ride. And so it begins. Blast off.

'The beast opens its jaws... I feel a splash of dino saliva'

And now I'm soaring through space. My craft zooms past 3D planets and veers round cascading asteroids, and I feel it. I mean really feel it – primarily in my bones, the suspended seat throwing my body around with



6D cinema



XD Dark Ride



7D gaming

the force of a fairground ride. As the journey takes me down through the stratosphere, to swerve through the floating highways of a futuristic city, I feel the gusts of air as we strafe buildings and dodge collisions. As we finally come into dock, I struggle bravely to disguise any outward signs of nausea.

That was *Space Race*, one of five short movies presented in '6D' at the Oasis Centre's recently launched Thrill Zone. The '6D' figure is arrived at by combining 3D cinema with the addition of three new sensations – motion, air and water. The other films on offer are arctic adventure *Happy Feet*, thrillseeker's favourite *Rollercoaster*, another futuristic adrenaline fest *Space Race*, and the *Jurassic Park*-inspired dino disaster, *Lost World*. Each running just five minutes, there's no real attempt at narrative and the movies are closer to a virtual fairground ride than cinema

as we know it. Still, it seems more than likely this kind of technology will be invading the multiplexes soon. Thrill Zone manager Saji Babu agrees. 'This is a new experience,' says the 35-year-old Indian national, 'this is... entertainment redefined'.

Thrill Zone isn't the only attraction using technology to push the limits of entertainment. Just days ago Mall of the Emirates' Magic Planet weighed in with another UAE-first – a '7D video game'. What sets XD Dark Ride aside from other multi-dimensional contenders is the edition of a seventh sensory affect – so on top of blowing air, splashing water, a moving chair and the (increasingly passé) 3D cinema, there's smoke, too.

Taking a seat among other eager hopefuls on opening day, we're handed a futuristic yellow pistol. As the curtains slide back up jumps a cartoon miner, shivering with 3D fear, who lays out the challenge ahead. His mine, he tells us, has been infiltrated with monsters and he needs us to clear them out.

Lurching off on an underground rail cart, channelling Indiana Jones as we crash through barriers and fall down mineshafts, it's an incredible adrenaline rush. There's less physical movement than the 6D cinema, but with a sophisticated system of 400

chair movements a second, carefully synched with the impressive concave 3D screen and theatrical orchestral music, the effect is more cinematic terror than fairground thrill.

And it's interactive, too; all the while I'm shooting at skeletons leaping up from all depths and directions. Staggering dazed from the eight-seat theatre, I fail to believe I was in there just five minutes.

That was *Forbidden Mine*, one of four games the theatre currently offers. Next I sit down for a round of *Los Banditos*, a Wild West-style shooter, which sees us galloping through the desert and splashing through rapids as we take on robot soldiers. In typical cinema style, the story wraps up with me and my co-players rounding on the mad scientist behind it all. As the curtain wheels back I'm greeted with a round of applause, the screen beaming down a congratulatory photo that announces me the best marksman at play. It's safe to say I'll be back for more. *Thrill Zone's 6D Cinema costs Dhs25. Open Sat-Wed 10am-10pm; Thu-Fri 10am-midnight. Oasis Centre (04 388 3551). Magic Planet's XD Dark Ride costs Dhs20. Open Sun-Wed 10am-10pm; Thu-Sat 10am-midnight, Mall of the Emirates (800 386).*

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