

## Potter Totters to Dark Side in Explosive ‘Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix’

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- [Albus Dumbledore](#) [2]
- [Daniel Radcliffe](#) [3]
- [Evanna Lynch](#) [4]
- [Greg Foster](#) [5]
- [Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix](#) [6]
- [IMAX](#) [7]
- [Interview](#) [8]
- [Luna Lovegood](#) [9]
- [Michael Gambon](#) [10]
- [Warner Bros.](#) [11]



CHICAGO – “If you didn’t watch the film and looked at people watching it, you’d see they’re constantly ducking and grabbing at things,” said IMAX Filmed President Greg Foster. “IMAX 3D is at the bridge of your nose.”



Michael Gambon plays Albus Dumbledore.

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

This between-your-eyes, in-your-face acronym Foster hypes from the helm of the uber-modern film company likely isn’t anything new to you. If you haven’t been IMAXed lately, though, times have changed. The enormously encompassing 3D injection is a new kind of happy pill.

On July 11 at Navy Pier in Chicago, the fifth Harry Potter iteration – “Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix” – takes center stage in IMAX. Its goal is to please your brain, tease your body and tickle all the nerve endings in between so you’re just on the brink of prophylactic shock.

“I’m in my 40s,” Foster said, who in 2007 is being invited as an Oscar-voting member, in an interview with Adam Fendelman. “When I was a kid, the studios knew they had the 12- to 24-year-olds on opening weekend. They’re more elusive today. They’re home watching DVDs, playing video games or hanging out on their parents’ 70-inch plasma TVs.

“They’re not going to the multiplexes to the same degree. You have to give them something they can’t replicate at home. IMAX 3D takes you somewhere you dream of going but probably won’t ever get to.”



Played by Daniel Radcliffe, Harry Potter grows increasingly haunted.

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

Short for Image Maximum, the IMAX you likely know best is its older DMR technology. It’s 2D. After being created nearly 40 years ago as an exploratory film format for short and expo films, only about five years ago with “Apollo 13” did IMAX technology ramp up to truly cerebral feats.

Our two eyes instinctively zero in on a single focal point that’s viewed from slightly different positions. Two slightly different images result. IMAX 3D exploits this. It actually consists of two separate strips of film projected simultaneously onto a screen.

The brain fuses these images into one through the process of stereopsis. Polarized glasses – not the red-blue glasses of anaglyph yesteryear – are deftly aligned with the light from mega-powered IMAX projectors. These 15,000-watt lamps are so bright you could see the light on the moon from Earth with the naked eye.



IMAX Filmed President/Chairman Greg Foster

Photo courtesy of IMAX

Techno babble aside, for Harry Potter junkies this translates into an “explosive,” 20-minute finale that has been converted into IMAX 3D. The preceding 118 minutes are 2D. Despite all its money, manpower and grandeur, IMAX can’t yet rip out a feature-length, non-digital film entirely in 3D.

Yet.

Once you’ve hit the 118-minute mark, the film will flash green Harry Potter glasses on the bottom of the screen. This is your signal to get nerdy. With glasses armed, Harry Potter and his gang of almost-adult miscreants will barrel with omnipresence into your body.

Previous to its moment in Harry Potter history this July, family films like “Happy Feet” and “Night at the Museum” came to moviegoers in IMAX with incremental success. The film “300” was especially “a big deal” to IMAX, Foster says, who acknowledges that it did 10 percent of the business on only 1 percent of the screens.



Evanna Lynch plays Luna Lovegood.

Photo courtesy of Warner Bros.

The creation process is one that’s “not free but also not going to break the bank,” Foster says, adding that he only has eight slots a year to time his prowess around blockbuster films. Foster targets visionary filmmakers like George Lucas, Ron Howard, Tom Hanks, Zach Snyder and Chris Nolan.

As technology refines, conversion fleets. He says “Apollo 13” consumed three months of conversion time, “The Matrix Revolutions” abridged to three weeks and “Spider-Man 3” whizzed by in 10 days.

“Down the road, the vast majority will be in 3D. We’ll see some kind of enhanced, interactive experience,” Foster said. “I’m constantly pushing the envelope of invention. I have all the confidence in the world that what will take place in the home, in 3D or in theaters will be at the forefront of innovation, imagination and invention.”

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[12]

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[13]

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- [4] <http://www.hollywoodchicago.com/news/evanna-lynch>
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