

The View From Here

As I read in the newspaper today, I was shocked but not totally surprised that one of my childhood mainstays is being retired. The [View-Master](#) is a small plastic toy in which was place a white white wheel full of 3-d pictures. The wheels initially contained scenes of actual places (The Grand Canyon, Disney Parks, I had a set from Cedar Point that probably would be worth something if only I had been a child who thought about such things). There was a [camera](#) made during the 50s with which you could create your own View-Master reels. Later, reels of movies, television shows, and other forms of popular culture were introduced. I had reels full of Mickey Mouse, Winnie the Pooh, superheroes (I had a series of Caped Crusader reels taken from the 60s television series featuring Catwoman), the Flintstones, and others.

In an effort to appeal to increasingly uninterested kids, new versions of the toy were introduced. I had the projector that enabled the images to be shown on a wall, or set up in a dark room on a “screen” consisting of a white sheet placed over a few boxes stacked on top of each other. Friends would come into my theatre and watch as the scenes unfolded to improvised narration. I believe there was a “talking” version as well.

Over the years, sales of the View-Master have decreased exponentially. The majority of children are much more interested in video games, DVDs and the like. But for at least one 8-10 year old growing up in the late 70s-early 80s, it provided hours of imagination and fun.