



user complete autonomy to move within a virtual space, with CVR the user has no real control other than where they look as the video plays. But because it uses pre-rendered pictures and sound, CVR programmes can approach the quality found in high-end television or films, and involve real people shot in actual physical locations. Recognising the power of this new format, YouTube and Vimeo both added 360° video playback services providing the public with easy access to CVR content.

The first major producers of CVR have been news organisations looking to “put viewers in stories” on location. *The New York Times* is the largest with its free Daily 360 service.

In 2016, it commissioned *Great Performers: LA Noir*, a series of dramatic CVR shorts involving big-name Hollywood talent. Around the same time, the Sundance Film Festival introduced a VR strand to its New Frontier showcase.

Last month, Protozoa Pictures – the production company founded by acclaimed director Darren Aronofsky (*Black Swan*) – signed a seven-figure deal for a new three-part VR series about exploring space, called *Spheres*.

So does this mean that Hollywood has finally embraced virtual reality? Arguably yes, but the question is, for how long? Disney has invested more than \$65m in the CVR portal and distributor Jaunt VR, and Facebook, which has been in discussions with major studios to create its own TV productions, acquired Oculus for \$2 billion.

Yet there is no indication that significant revenue is flowing. Outlets

such as *The New York Times*, CNN and the BBC use CVR content to drive traffic to their websites rather than generate income directly, considering value in increased viewer numbers.

Despite the rapid expansion of VR in all its forms, there are still no established distribution mechanisms that enable companies to recoup their investments in VR production, let alone generate profit. In fact, financial analysts have noted that overall, VR industry revenue was lower than expected for much of 2017 although it has started to rebound.

So, while deals like *Spheres* are intriguing and noteworthy, it is far too early to say that virtual reality has become a mainstream medium. Headsets are still cumbersome, and watching VR programmes can still make some nauseous.

The current wave of interest in VR has many similarities with its rise and fall 20 years ago. But we only need look at Hollywood’s numerous dalliances with 3D – yet to be successfully established as an alternative film or television format – to wonder about the fate of VR.

Whether the industry ultimately embraces it will depend on the technology winning over audiences with an improved experience that is more comfortable, affordable and engaging.

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THE WHEY OF THE WORLD

PETER TRUDGILL

explores the links between cheese and the development of European languages



Very few people in this country will have heard of Grevire, in spite of the fact that the place is known the world over.

It is a small town in Switzerland which is called Greyerz in German, and Greierz, Griertsch or Grüüersch in Swiss German.

Grevire is the town’s name in the local language, Arpitan (Franco-Provencal). Other Arpitan place-names include Dzenèva, Lojena, and Môtroelx. Since the invasion of Switzerland by Napoleon in 1797, Arpitan has gradually been obliterated in most of the western areas of the country, where it was originally spoken, though it does survive rather strongly across the border in north-western Italy, in the Val d’Aosta.

Grevire itself is one of the few places where the language still survives in Switzerland: nearly everywhere else it has been replaced by French.

In French, Dzenèva, Lojena, and Môtroelx are known as Genève (Geneva in English), Lausanne, and Montreux. And Grevire is Gruyères: it is under this name that the town has become world famous as the home of a certain type of cheese.

The name Grevire/Gruyères/Grüüersch comes from the Vulgar Latin language which was spoken all over Switzerland after the original Celtic and other languages disappeared under the Roman Empire.

In Latin it was called Grusaria, with grus being the Latin word for ‘crane’ (the bird), so the name presumably originally meant ‘place where cranes gather’. Experts do not in fact believe that cranes were ever very common in the area, so the name may go back to a single unexpected – and therefore memorable – sighting.

The name of the town, and the cheese, is so famous that at least one other type of cheese has been named after it.

This is the Greek cheese graviera, which is particularly associated with certain Greek islands, notably Crete, but which in fact does not resemble gruyère very closely.

The word came into Greek from Italian, where the Swiss cheese is called gruviera or groviera.

Another rather famous place that most people in this country will never have heard of is Sovetsk. This is a town in the

Kaliningrad area of Russia, the exclave which is surrounded by Lithuania, Poland and the Baltic Sea and is more than 400 miles by road from the nearest part of the rest of Russia.

The local language in Sovetsk today is Russian, but the original tongue was the now extinct Baltic language Prussian, which was related to Lithuanian. German-speaking colonisation from the west, led by the Teutonic Knights, began in the mediaeval period; and Old Prussian, like Arpitan, was obliterated – though even more so, since the language died out completely in the 1600s.

Before 1945, the main languages in the town were Lithuanian, Low German, and German: until the Second World War, Sovetsk was part of the German province of East Prussia. Kaliningrad was called Königsberg.

In Lithuanian, Sovetsk was called Tilže; and in Polish it was known as Tylża. The German name – and this is the one you will have heard of – was Tilsit.

People have heard of Tilsit because it, too, is the name of a well-known type of cheese. In a sense it is also a Swiss cheese.

Tilsit was originally made by members of a Mennonite Swiss family who had emigrated to German East Prussia from Emmmental – which is about 60 miles from Gruyères.

The particular type of cheese they manufactured was developed in East Prussia by a Mrs Westphal, née Klunk. In the early 20th Century, an August Westphal became famous as the “Cheese King” of Wisconsin, USA, owning numerous dairies and cheese factories there.

Today there are no German speakers left in Sovetsk; the Russians who took over Kaliningrad in 1945 replaced them with speakers of Russian and Belorussian. But, unlike Grevire, the older name of Tilsit still lives on in the name of a cheese.

DOUBLE MEANING OF ‘CRANE’

Cranes are large birds from the Gruidae family (from Latin grus). From the 15th Century, the English word crane has also been used for those machines – which resemble the bird – which are used for raising and lowering heavy objects. The same practice of naming the machine after the bird occurs in other languages: in French they’re both called grue (also from Latin grus).