

## Folsom movie theater to offer seats with action

[cmeyer@sacbee.com](mailto:cmeyer@sacbee.com)

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There's a rumbling in Folsom.

It travels from one's back to legs, as a D-BOX theater seat renders physical the roar of engines in a scene from the 2009 film "Fast & Furious." When Vin Diesel turns his vehicle sharply, the theater seat dips to the right. When the camera reveals a sheer drop ahead, the seat pitches forward to heighten the effect.

Until you become accustomed to it, the D-BOX seat feels like a chair massager that has had a psychotic break. But the actual movement of the seats, debuting locally today at Palladio 16 Cinemas with the sandblasted Jake Gyllenhaal epic "Prince of Persia," is a mere inch and a half.

The wild-ride effect comes from the complex electro-mechanical technology within the chairs, said Guy Marcoux of D-BOX Technologies of Montreal. Movements are synced to a film's images and sounds via a frame-by-frame process that can take 300 hours to complete.

"If you watch people sitting in them, they are really not moving that far," said Palladio 16 Cinemas general manager Nate Alchesky, who demonstrated the new seats for The Bee earlier this week. "(The seats) just make you feel like they are."

Filling just two rows in one auditorium in the Palladio multiplex, the D-BOX seats are roomier than regular theater chairs, with space between seats to accommodate movement and cup holders that look like steel cages.

"When your seat is moving around, you want to make sure the cup (stays) in there," Alchesky said. "(The seats) are not violent, but you don't want that 44-ounce cup going flying."

The seats are not recommended for children younger than 10 without adult supervision. They also carry warnings for the elderly, pregnant women and people with head and neck injuries, heart problems and other health concerns. Each seat has an intensity control similar to the volume control on an airplane seat.

Not every film synced to the D-BOX seats is as intense as "Fast & Furious." But the seats don't lend themselves to quiet character studies. The next movie after "Persia" to use the technology will be the comic-book Western "Jonah Hex," in June.

"You want to get your money's worth" through films that contain more action, Marcoux said. D-BOX seats, assigned by number like seats at a concert venue, cost \$8 more than a general-admission ticket of \$10.25. (The Palladio 16 has sold out its 22 D-BOX seats for at least one showing of "Persia" today, Alchesky said).

The Palladio eventually will sell D-BOX seats to 3-D films, intensifying the immersive experience but potentially adding another surcharge. The multiplex "will make a compromise on that," said Dave Corkill, owner of the Palladio and its parent theater chain, Petaluma-based Cinema West. "I can't see people paying \$20 for a ticket."

The D-BOX seats are meant to draw in patrons, not scare them away with high prices. "What we are doing here is having one more feature" at a multiplex that already boasts digital projectors in every auditorium and six auditoriums equipped for 3-D.

Exhibitors and movie studios have added new technologies to attract patrons since the advent of "talkies." Some have been gimmicks, like "Smell-O-Vision." Others, like recently revived 3-D, have become semi-permanent or permanent features.

"It is a gimmick if it only works with a couple of films," said Phil Lelyveld of the University of Southern California's Entertainment Technology Center. Of D-BOX seats, Lelyveld asks, "The question is, will there be a movement for more than a few of these?"

Since it started animating theater seats a year ago, D-BOX Technologies has installed seats in 23 theaters in the United States and Canada. Its studio partners include Disney, Warner Bros. and Universal.

"We chose them because they are the only technology (of their kind) that has successfully lobbied the motion picture industry," Corkill said. He predicts most users of D-BOX seats, for which the Palladio has an exclusive contract for this region, will be teenagers and people in their 20s.

After trying out test seats in the Palladio's lobby, Michael Sanchez, 51, and his wife, Paula, 50, have to agree. The Sanchezes, of Rancho Cordova, have seen "Avatar" in 3-D and say they are up for some advanced moviegoing technology. Just not in their seats.

"For movies, I want pictures and sound, not vibrating chairs," Michael said. "But it feels good on your back, I guess."

Marcoux said the seats are a hit at a multiplex near a retirement community in the Phoenix, Ariz., area.

"We have retired folks filling up seats in matinees," Marcoux said with a chuckle.

Corkill said the Palladio 16 eventually will add D-BOX seats in other auditoriums. But they always will constitute only a fraction of total seating.

"At the end of the day, it will be a minority of people who enjoy the seats," Corkill said. But those who do can reserve them at the Palladio, just as they can choose to see films in 2-D or 3-D.

"There is no reason there can't be a place for everyone."

### D-BOX SEATS AT PALLADIO 16 CINEMAS

The Palladio 16 Cinemas are at 240 Palladio Parkway, off Iron Point Road, in Folsom. There are 22 D-BOX seats available for showings of "Prince of Persia." For information, call (916) 984-7469. To reserve a seat, go to [www.cinemawest.com](http://www.cinemawest.com). Call The

Bee's Carla Meyer, (916) 321-1118

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