

Dolby helps 'Pacific Rim' thrill ears as well as eyes

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Filmmaker Guillermo del Toro (R) and his spouse Lorenza Newton arrive at the premiere of Warner Bros. Pictures' and Legendary Pictures' "Pacific Rim" at Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, on July 9, 2013. The blockbuster film opening worldwide this weekend is the latest big-name production to incorporate Dolby Atmos technology - which does for sound what high-definition and 3-D did for images.

Dolby sound specialists have given director Guillermo del Toro a way to

put movie goes into the thick of battles between giant robots and fearsome monsters in "Pacific Rim."

The blockbuster film opening worldwide this weekend is the latest big-name production to incorporate Dolby Atmos technology—which does for sound what high-definition and 3-D did for images.

"Everyone talks about 3-D images, and Atmos is 3-D sound," del Toro said in a video interview with Dolby.

"This is not just a gimmicky idea," he continued. "It is really of paramount importance to the mix of a film."

Atmos, which made its debut about a year ago in Pixar's Oscar-winning [animated film](#) "Brave," was developed in a small theater that serves as a sound lab at Dolby's headquarters in San Francisco.

In order to prevent "the outside world from interfering" with acoustics, Dolby senior director of sound technology Brett Crockett explained, the intimate venue is actually a room inside a room and rests on large rubber blocks.

Fabric walls mask rows of speakers, which can also be found in the ceiling and, as is typical in theaters, behind the screen.

"This is one of the rooms where we invented the Atmos system," Crockett said while providing AFP a look behind the scenes.



Actress Kelly Macdonald arrives at the world premiere of Disney Pixar's "Brave," at the Dolby Theatre in Hollywood, California, on June 18, 2012. Dolby Atmos technology made its debut about a year ago in Pixar's Oscar-winning animated film "Brave" and was developed in a small theater that serves as a sound lab at Dolby's headquarters in San Francisco.

Commonly-used theater systems deliver sounds to one side of the room or the other depending on effects being sought by film makers.

Atmos software goes further: by tapping into [computing power](#), it can send commands to individual speakers—so sounds, whether rain drops, footsteps or explosions, appear to be coming from specific spots in a

room.

Atmos can work in any theater, but the more speakers, the better. Ideally, Atmos theaters have ceiling speakers.

"We added more speakers, but it is not to make it louder it is to make it more realistic," Crockett said.

More than 40 films have been made using Atmos, including "Man of Steel," "Star Trek into Darkness," "Iron Man 3" and "Monsters University."

"Atmos provides the completely immersive sound experience that filmmakers like myself have long dreamed about," Oscar-winning director Peter Jackson said in a statement provided by Dolby.

Atmos creation software helps movie makers to pinpoint where in theaters they want sounds. And Atmos software assesses the "sound health" of theaters daily, tuning audio accordingly, according to Crockett.

More than 200 cinemas worldwide have adopted Atmos and Dolby hopes the number will be close to 1,000 by the end of this year.

"When theater operators see the reaction of audiences, they will put it in," said Crockett.

Del Toro's eagerly anticipated "Pacific Rim" plays on his lifelong fascination with Japanese mega-monsters.

"Monsters are my obsession," the Mexican director told AFP. "You see some people whose faces light up when they're talking about their puppies or kittens. Me, I'm happy when I'm talking about monsters."

The new film—with an estimated budget of around \$180 million—stars British actors Charlie Hunnam and Idris Elba as humans who control giant robots constructed to battle a crop of enormous sea monsters that emerge from a chasm at the bottom of the Pacific Ocean.

"With Atmos, it is not just about creating things that move around you and above you and create a sense of surround, of dimension in a theater," del Toro said.

"It is also about achieving the perfect balance between music and effects, which are always fighting for space in the [sound](#) realm, and delivering to the audience a pristine, optimal experience through that mix."

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