

## Screening Room: Cinema Savior-- or Digital Death Star?

Written by Bob Snyder  
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**Napster, Facebook, Plaxo, Spotify...**what they all have in common is founder or investor **Sean Parker**

Sean Parker is the archangel Gabriel of digital disruption, a billionaire entrepreneur whose very presence heralds the apocalypse of traditional business. He is as welcome in any industry as Carl Icahn is on any company board.

Now Parker descends on Hollywood offering a deal that would, instead of 30 pieces of silver, sell out theater owners for a \$150 set-top box and \$50 per movie.

Attendance at movies bounce-backed last year to 1.34 billion but Hollywood feels the pressure from streaming alternatives. And internet behemoths -- not content to be digital streaming platforms-- are starting to figure out they can be content creators.

Cut out movie theaters, cut out Hollywood's extravagant film companies... it's a perfect prayer book for digital disruption.

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**Screening Room** claims its secure, anti-piracy technology lets users watch movies using a \$150 set-top box: the start-up would charge \$50 to rent a movie and users would have 48 hours before it expires.

Film companies are split... According to *Variety*, **Sony, Universal**, and **Fox** are all interested while **Disney** is not. Their thinking is theater turnout is great if you have a blockbuster, but most films are not. Extra revenue is appealing. And, hey, in the land of Rocky #7, X-Men #7 and 29 Godzillas, who wants to depend upon upping their creativity?

Directors, the rock stars of Hollywood, are split. **Peter Jackson**, the Academy Award-winning director behind *Rings* and *Hobbit* series, is publicly backing Parker's Screening Room, along with **JJ Abrams, Steven Spielberg**, and **Martin Scorsese**.

Others like *Avatar* director **James Cameron** and *Interstellar* director Christopher Nolan argue against. Cameron's producing partner Jon Landau says, "...the in-theater experience is the wellspring that drives our entire business, regardless of what other platforms we eventually play on and should eventually play on. No one is against playing in the home, but there is a sequencing of events that leads to it."

Most theater owners think the film companies want to hand the keys to the kingdom to the barbarian at the gate. Only Chinese-owned **AMC**, one of America's largest theater chains is reportedly on board.

So in comes Sean Parker with a devil's bargain to open the door: he will give customers two tickets to see in theaters every movie they stream through the Screening Room-- and he will also give movie theaters as much as \$20 of the \$50 rental fee.

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[Read Peter Jackson's Defense of Screening Room](#)