

Why 4D technology ruins movies

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Designers are on the constant lookout for ways to enhance the movie-screening experience. It's easily seen in the evolution from silent films to talkies to color to HD and 3D movies. Obviously, I've whittled down the progress list a little, but the point is it's a changing technology. Oftentimes, now that 3D has made a (dismal) debut in homes and a (really expensive) debut in theaters, 4D is being tossed around as "the next big thing."

Luckily for those of us who have no actual desire to experience smell-o-vision—I'm all set with not knowing what London actually smelled like when Henry Higgins lived there—it's been a largely unsuccessful process. Of course, exceptions like Disney's *Bug's Life* and *The Muppets* show exist in theme parks specially outfitted with different immersion technology, but it's far from mainstream.

But that hasn't stopped Shogo Fukushima, a doctoral student from the University of Electro-Communications in Tokyo, from creating the "Chilly Chair" to give moviegoers a little extra scare.

The "[Chilly Chair](#) [1]" was designed as immersive technology that replicates feelings of fear or nervousness in the viewers at scary or anticipatory moments in a horror film.

Essentially, once you're sitting in the chair, you place your arms on the armrests and under the "arms," which are made from an [insulating dielectric plate](#) [2], an electrode, and a rubber plate. As you're watching your movie, the chair sends electricity through the electrode, effectively polarizing the dielectric plate, which causes the hair on your arms to rise -- facilitating a similar sensation to what happens when you're naturally nervous or scared.

For the sake of full disclosure, I don't like horror films or the feeling of being scared,

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but this doesn't seem like that great of an immersion. The whole point is to feel like you're IN the movie, right? But doesn't this technology—and a lot of other 4D technology—just serve as a cold bucket of water to the face (sometimes literally), pointing out the fact that you're actually sitting in a chair in a theater? Call me a curmudgeon, but I don't think any of this enhances the experience as much as it takes away from it. Plus, as far as fear goes, I think having a decent storyline—a dark room, a long pause before the killer jumps out, a monster you can't quite get a glimpse of—will go a lot further in scaring people than a smoke and mirrors chair.

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- [1] <http://www.engadget.com/2012/08/09/chilly-chair-static-electricity-hands-on/>
- [2] <http://www.odditycentral.com/news/japanese-chilly-chair-makes-horror-movies-even-scarier.html>