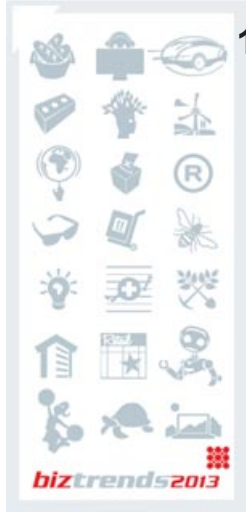


# Insight into cinema in 2013

 By [Ryan Williams](#)

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I believe this year will be a positive one for cinema in South Africa, with a variety of influential trends taking hold of the industry. Digitalisation, 3D, blockbusters, increased attendance and on-the-mark cinema campaigns are all sure to contribute to a successful year.



## 1. Digital rollout and high frame rates will impact on the way we view movies and on-screen advertising

Cinema technology evolves at giddy paces, bringing both filmmakers and audiences better pictures and better sound for hugely improved moviemaking and viewing experiences.

Peter Jackson's *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey* was a taste of what is to come. The very first major Hollywood blockbuster to be shot at 48 frames per second or High Frame Rate 3D (HFR 3D), a digital 3D motion picture format using a higher frame rate than the industry standard of 24 frames per second. What this means for cinema-goers is a smoother and more lifelike picture as the eye sees twice the number of images each second.

## 2. 3D audio/Atmos will enhance the way in which cinema is experienced

Dolby Atmos provides additional upper hemisphere surround sound where traditional speakers are located to the rear and side walls of the cinema. Each speaker may be independently operated, giving an immersive experience where sound can be placed with pinpoint precision anywhere across the theatre. This cutting-edge technology allows sounds to move around the theatre like never before, reproducing a natural and lifelike audio experience that perfectly matches the story on screen.

By way of example, the image of something falling from above the onscreen character's perspective will be accompanied by the sound coming from directly overhead in the cinema, as though you were hearing it in real life.

The audience is drawn into the very heart of the action as it plays out on the big screen and, together with the HFR 3D visuals, presents a radical shift in the way movies will be viewed, heard and experienced going forward.

## 3. Blockbusters in 2013 add to the appeal of cinema this year

With digital projection, blockbusters can be launched onto the local circuit closer to their international release date. South Africans will be able to enjoy films as they were made to be viewed - as a holistic in-theatre experience with comfortable chairs, massive 3D screens and surround sound that ensures a whole new level of life-like entertainment.

The new movie releases in 2013 will have us on the edge of our seats. It's going to be a big year with such highly anticipated titles such as *Good Day to Die Hard*, *Hansel & Gretel: Witch Hunters*, *Iron Man 3*, *The Great Gatsby*, *World War Z*, *Oz the Great and Powerful*, *Monsters University* and *The Hobbit: The Desolation of Smaug* all making their theatrical debuts.

## 4. Attendance growth due to an entertainment experience and benefit programmes mean a thriving industry

A focus on innovation to further separate the cinema experience from other ways of viewing film content will continue to drive attendances. The last half of 2012 has shown incremental audience growth versus the previous year, and I anticipate this trend to continue.

Marketing initiatives that highlight the cinema experience will continue and we can expect to see increasing benefits via club programmes to drive both frequency and greater sophistication in cinema database marketing.

The momentum has started to shift as 2012 saw a new South African box office record for the opening weekend set by *The Avengers* in April. This record was broken in November, when the last of the Twilight franchise films opened to the largest-ever opening weekend audience in SA film history. At the current pace, Twilight will be the 20th strongest film in more than 100 years of SA cinema audiences, attracting audiences not seen in SA cinemas since the early 1990s.

## 5. Advertisers and cinema campaigns ensure that cinema is not just about entertainment; it's a marketing platform

There is a growing move towards cinema as an out-of-home experiential communications vehicle. In one venue, the existing congregations of people can be targeted through a range of different touchpoints, right from ticket purchase via digital infrastructure, all the way through to activations in the theatre itself. International marketers are increasingly using the full range of opportunities, including foyers, queues, catering dwell time, ticketing and the onscreen experience.

By way of example, this trend has seen cinema become the fastest-growing advertising vehicle in several major markets around the world, including the Nordics, Australia and Russia (ahead of online and mobile advertising).

The latest research from Millward Brown shows that ad noting increases by an average of 38% when using cinema in combination with television, making cinema an increasingly important vehicle to improve advertising ROI. The study also shows that cinema is particularly effective to reach male and youth audiences, so we should expect to see advertisers valuing the commercial impact of cinema as well as the visual impact.

## 6. Flexibility through digitisation of cinema projection

Lastly, digitisation of cinema projection will allow advertisers far more flexibility in terms of targeting, guaranteed audience currencies and day part segmentation. This provides a keen opportunity for savvy marketers, given the cinema environment's proximity to retail outlets.

Overall, 2013 promises to be a watershed year for SA cinema. The technical improvements create a vastly superior viewing experience, well marketed by exhibitors and supported by a stellar content lineup from distributors.

With audiences coming back into the cinema space to experience great moments onscreen and in their lives, and the commercial impact of investing marketing monies in the cinema space, I believe this is a tipping point for both marketers and viewing customers.

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