



Immersion and Innovation: Why The French Cinema Exhibitor CGR chose Dolby Atmos

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"We firmly believe that exceptional sound quality is essential for our audiences"

Sébastien Bruel, Technical Director of French CGR Cinémas



CGR is one of France's largest cinema chains, with over 70 multiplexes nationwide. They offer a variety of movie experiences, including their own PLF concept 'ICE' featuring Dolby Atmos. CGR is also the leading operator of Dolby Atmos screens in France.

CGR x Dolby: Immersive sound at the heart of the spectator experience

It's no secret that today's fiercest competition among movie theaters is taking place in the home theatre. With innovation after innovation, watching movies at home has reached unprecedented quality levels. To draw audiences back into the cinema, it's imperative to offer them the very best. "Here at CGR, we have always been pioneers when it comes to new technologies," emphasises Sébastien Bruel, Technical Director of French CGR Cinémas. "It's essential for us—not only to differentiate ourselves, but because we want to provide our audiences with the best possible experience."

Technological advances in cinematic projection aim, for the most part, to transform film viewing into an ever-more immersive experience. Dolby Atmos represents the

pinnacle of spatialised sound. Thanks to a system that uses multiple audio channels and speakers placed all around the auditorium—including overhead—"Dolby Atmos delivers crisp sound that completely envelops the viewer, providing an unprecedented level of immersion in the film," explains Sébastien Bruel. Every scene, comes alive with exceptional detail and depth.

For CGR, adopting Dolby Atmos was part of its culture of innovation. In fact, they were the first in France to equip screens with this system back in 2015. "We firmly believe that exceptional sound quality is essential for our audiences," states Sébastien Bruel Technical Director of CGR Cinémas, a french cinema exhibitor.



"94% of cinema-goers are won over by the immersive sound of Dolby Atmos"

Audiences Won Over by the Dolby Atmos Experience

CGR took a methodical, strategic approach to rolling out Dolby Atmos. The first test took place in 2015 at CGR La Rochelle (France), which serves as the pilot site for all technological innovations. They decided to equip the large auditorium (20 metres wide, with 600 seats) with Dolby Atmos. "The results, according to our customer survey, were more than conclusive," says Sébastien Bruel. "We then chose to roll out Dolby Atmos progressively across the rest of our cinemas, starting with the largest auditoriums."

Feedback—both on social media and in post-show surveys—has been overwhelmingly positive. Some viewers noted, "Dolby Atmos immersive sound brings even greater clarity to dialogue and action scenes"; others said it is "Truly impressive!"

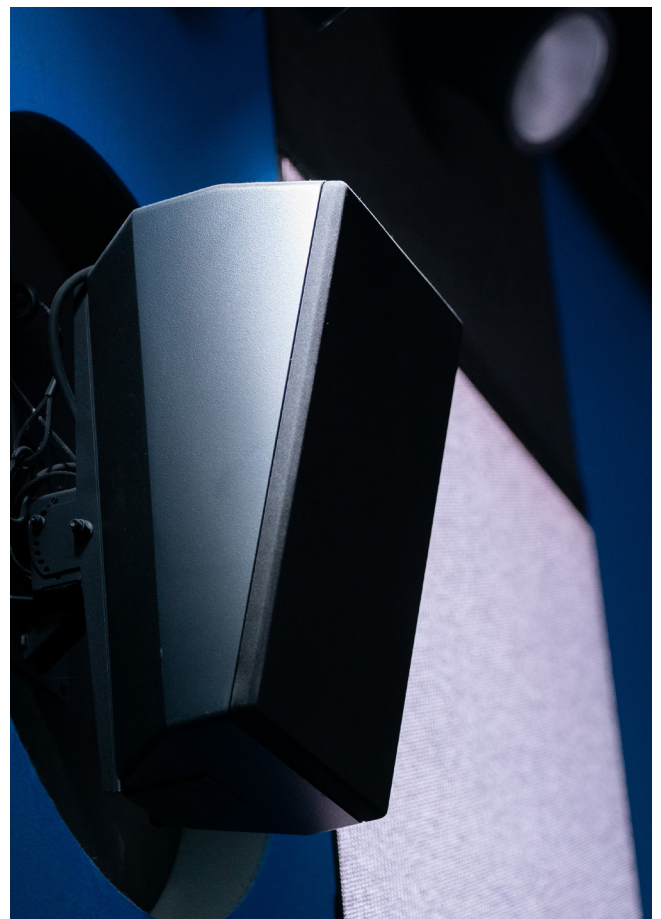
and "The sound immersion is fantastic and of very high quality." Indeed, according to the latest CGR surveys, 94% of cinema-goers are won over by the immersive sound of Dolby Atmos.

“Having Dolby Atmos has become a minimum requirement to differentiate the cinema experience from that at home”

Essential for a True Premium Experience

Upgrading a standard auditorium to Dolby Atmos takes on average 15 days. It also involves replacing the entire audio chain (cables, amplifiers, speakers, processors...) and installing new speakers (behind the screen, along the sides, at the rear, and overhead). When CGR launched its new ICE (Immersive Cinema Experience) auditoriums in December 2016, Dolby Atmos was an indispensable feature. “A premium experience must offer the very best,” underlines Sébastien Bruel. “We equipped our ICE auditoriums in order of overall cinema attendance and number of screens.” Over the 5- to 6-week renovation period: audiences enjoy new seats, tiered seating, a new projector and screen, the installation of panels beside the screen to enhance visual immersion... and, of course, Dolby Atmos in its greatest configuration. “The difference between a standard Dolby Atmos auditorium and an ICE auditorium is that, in the latter, we always install the maximum number of speakers possible,” explains Sébastien Bruel. For example, an ICE auditorium will have five speakers behind the screen,

whereas most standard Dolby Atmos rooms have three. Total speaker count depends on the auditorium size. Moreover, in the maximum setup, each overhead speaker diffuses its own audio channel and together they create an even more realistic sound environment.





Today, 93 CGR auditoriums in France are equipped with Dolby Atmos, including around fifty premium auditoriums about 13% of their holdings. This makes CGR the number one Dolby Atmos operator in France, with their installations accounting for almost a third of the 300 Dolby Atmos-equipped screens nationwide. And the rollout continues at a rate of roughly ten new auditoriums per year. "We're constantly renovating our cinemas, which gives us the opportunity to add new Dolby Atmos installations," notes Sébastien Bruel. Even when faced with the challenge of smaller auditoriums he's convinced of the importance of the initiative: "Having Dolby Atmos has

become a minimum requirement to differentiate the cinema experience from that at home." Indeed, the Dolby name has long been associated in movie-goers' minds with an exceptional audio experience.





A Strategic Lever for CGR

When entering an auditorium, patrons first notice the comfort of the seats, but once the film begins, “they immediately pick up on the sound improvements,” says Sébastien Briel. In CGR’s regular surveys, the immersive quality of Dolby Atmos sound is almost unanimously praised.

“The enveloping sound of Dolby Atmos is essential to offer a unique experience,” continues Sébastien Briel. “In fact, without Dolby Atmos, we would become obsolete”. Dolby Atmos is therefore a key strategic lever for CGR.

CGR has deliberately chosen not to charge extra for Dolby Atmos auditoriums—unlike ICE auditoriums. “We don’t want our customers to pay a surcharge for the technology, except in specific cases like 3D films, which require special equipment for each screening,” explains Sébastien Briel.

Moreover, CGR’s policy is always to screen a film simultaneously on two auditorium types, “to let viewers choose their preferred experience,” says Sébastien Briel.

Dolby Atmos auditoriums consistently fill up faster and attract more viewers than standard screens. And when a film is shown in both ICE and standard Dolby Atmos auditoriums, it’s the ICE experience—with its premium services—that proves most popular. “ICE tickets always sell out first,” says Sébastien Briel. According to CGR, in 2024 the occupancy rate for ICE auditoriums was 1.7 times higher than for standard Dolby Atmos rooms. The number of admissions—1.6 million in 2024—was on average 1.6 times greater. “Premium experiences are sought after by audiences,” emphasises Sébastien Briel. And Dolby Atmos is an indispensable component of that.