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## DATEBOOK

### SCREENING ROOMS THAT'LL MAKE YOU REEL

Insiders, the media and the very rich have their own private spots to see films

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**W**hen film directors, writers or stars go to the movies, they usually drive right by that sparkling new multiplex at the shopping mall. Instead, they head for a private, intimate screening room in the somewhere-out-there that marks the difference between them and everybody else.

There are private or semiprivate screening rooms tucked away all over the Bay Area. And that's not counting the home theaters considered essential these days by some of the very rich.

Some of the private screening rooms are plain, even a little worn. Others are richly appointed, with overstuffed couch seating, an area for catered meals, and telephones and technical controls at hand.

In most, where film-going is business more than pleasure, a producer or director can schmooze the next deal while the cast or crew gets a first glimpse at the rough print they've been working on.

Although private screening rooms — from the rarefied setting of George Lucas' at Skywalker Ranch to the workaday Variety Club Preview Room in downtown San Francisco — seem like the exclusive domain of film royalty, that isn't always the case.

Some of the best rooms — though not Lucasfilm's — are rented to the



Director Ron Howard chose the plush screening room of the Delancey Street Foundation to view dailies of the movie he's filming in town, "Ed TV".

public at premium prices. A steady trickle of people seeking a different twist on birthdays or anniversaries is turning to private screening rooms for fun, often with catered parties, snack bars and live entertainment.

But most screening rooms are used by movie-business insiders. So

it's not unusual for Robin Williams, who loves working close to home and family in San Francisco, to see the dailies for his latest movie-in-production — currently "Patch Adams" — at a place like Delancey Street Foundation's plush minitheater at 600 Embarcadero.

Delancey Street was also chosen by director Ron Howard to view dailies on his current project, "Ed TV," starring Matthew McConaughey. The 150-seat room is smartly appointed, with loge seating in tasteful pale green, a hills-and-Golden Gate Bridge motif on the walls

and a mid-auditorium control console to allow filmmakers to tweak the dials.

"Convenience and flexibility are major reasons we're popular within the industry," said Delancey Street's Stephanie Muller, who manages screening-room business for the foundation, which supports one of the nation's largest residential education communities for former substance abusers and ex-convicts.

Like most rooms, Delancey can handle 35mm and 16mm, is equipped with high-tech Dolby Surround Sound, is THX-aligned and offers computer interface capabilities with a powerful Sony video projector. The basic rental rate is \$125 an hour, but that's just for the space. Film rental is additional.

With room to party in a glassed-in lobby, Delancey is frequently used for small catered events (the foundation runs a catering service). The Directors Guild of America often screens current features there.

The velvet-decorated Variety Club theater is also often used by film companies to screen dailies. When major productions like "The Rock" or "Mrs. Doubtfire" were shooting in San Francisco, business spilled over from one room to another to accommodate demand.

"We cooperate with each other," Repp said. "If I'm all booked up, I refer to Delancey Street, and they do the same for us."