

CAPTIONED MOVIES AT LOCAL THEATERS

By Teresa Rogers and Bill Stark

Silent movies once provided an equal opportunity to enjoy going to the movies without regard to anyone's ability to hear. But with the introduction of sound to movies more than eighty years ago, people with a hearing loss were faced with an access disparity that, to a large (but, thankfully, diminishing) extent, still exists today. While people with a hearing loss are no longer completely disregarded by the purveyors of mainstream film, they often must wait for films to be released on DVD, hopefully with the inclusion of captions or subtitles.



Captioning is the process of converting the audio portion of a film, video, CD-ROM, or other production into text which is displayed on a screen or monitor. Captions not only display words to indicate spoken dialogue or narration, but also include sounds, sound effects, speaker identification, music, and other auditory information not conveyed in speech. It is rare for first-run movies shown in theaters to be instantly accessible to people who are deaf or hard of hearing, however.

Not all movies are captioned in the same way, and terminology to describe the types of captioning varies. Most people use the terms *open captioning (OC)* and *closed captioning (CC)*. In movie theaters, open captions consist of those requiring no manipulation or interaction by the viewing audience; the captions are viewable on the screen with no special equipment or adjustment required by the audience. Closed captions in theaters consists of captions that can only be seen by a person with the necessary equipment, typically provided by the theater at no charge.

2010 ADA STANDARDS FOR ACCESSIBLE DESIGN

The 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design states: A public accommodation shall take those steps that may be necessary to ensure that no individual with a disability is excluded, denied services, segregated, or otherwise treated differently than other individuals because of the absence of auxiliary aids and services, unless the public accommodation can demonstrate that taking those steps would fundamentally alter the nature of the goods, services, facilities, privileges, advantages, or accommodation being offered or would result in an undue burden, significant difficulty, or expense. The updated ADA regulation now specifies that open or closed captioning are included in the term "auxiliary aids and services."

SYSTEMS FOR THEATER CAPTIONING

There are several captioning service providers for first-run cinema releases: Digital Theater Systems Cinema Subtitling System (DTS-CSS), MoPix® (Rear Window® Captioning), USL Closed Captioning System (CCS), and CaptiView. A brief summary of each system's features is provided below.

- The DTS-CSS technology was developed in response to the large number of requests by the deaf community for increased availability of OC movie screenings and also the desire to assist film distributors and cinemas to make the provision of captioned screenings more economical and flexible. This technology makes open captioning possible by projecting subtitles directly onto the motion picture screen instead of etching or over-laying them onto the film itself. DTS systems also have the capability to play back closed captions via the Rear Window® Captioning system.



- The Rear Window® Captioning (RWC) system is a technology that makes it possible for exhibitors to provide closed captioning for deaf and hard of hearing moviegoers without displaying them to the entire audience. RWC is also significant because it doesn't require special OC prints or separate screenings, since the captions are not on the film itself.

The Motion Picture Access effort (MoPix®) is an initiative of the National Center for Accessible Media (NCAM), a division of the WGBH Educational Foundation. This effort was launched in 1992 to research and develop ways of making movies in theaters accessible to deaf or hard of hearing people through the RWC system.



© Jeffrey Dunn for WGBH

Visit a [listing of movie theaters offering Rear Window® Captioning](#) provided by WGBH along with a [listing of movies recently released with captions](#) (includes a list of movies released with [description](#) as well).

- The USL Closed Captioning System (CCS) is designed to enhance the deaf or hard of hearing cinema patron's movie-going experience. A single infrared emitter broadcasts closed caption text and two channels of audio into an auditorium. Channel one is for hearing impaired (HI) and Channel two is for visual impaired narrative (VI-N). The use of IR instead of radio frequency transmission eliminates interference between adjacent auditoriums.

Two types of private display units are available: The "Seat Mount" display that clips to the arm rest and an "Eyewear/glasses" display. Each unit contains custom optics which display the caption as a virtual image far enough from the viewer to avoid the need to refocus between the caption and the movie screen.



- Doremi Cinema introduces the new CaptiView Closed Caption Viewing System for the deaf or hard of hearing movie audiences. This system transmits and receives AES-128 encrypted closed captions on a wireless band frequency. With an 80 meter signal range, CaptiView can be used from ANY seat in the house (unlike existing “mirror image” systems that limit seat selection).

The CaptiView system consists of a small, OLED display on a bendable support arm that fits into the theater seat cup holder. The easy-to-read screen is equipped with a rechargeable Lithium Ion battery that lasts up to 16 hours per charge. The high contrast display comes with a privacy visor so it can be positioned directly in front the movie patron with minimal impact or distraction to neighboring patrons.



CaptiView is economically priced to allow the cinema owner to outfit 100% of the multiplex. It runs on the existing digital cinema server, so no additional hardware is required. It supports SMPTE and Cinecanvas packages, and can support up to four languages simultaneously.

ARE THERE ANY CAPTIONED MOVIE THEATERS NEAR YOU?

To find out whether there are theaters in your area that provide captioned screenings of current cinema releases, check your local newspaper, subscribe to [NCAM's e-mail list](#), or consult the growing number of websites that provide this information, some of which are identified below.

[AMC Theatres](#)

[Caption Fish](#)

[Regal Entertainment Group](#)

[Marcus Theatres](#)

For accessible movie trailers, visit:

<http://www.yourlocalcinema.com/subtitled.trailers.html> or <http://dotsub.com/view/genre/genre.trailer>

CONCLUSION

People who are deaf or hard of hearing want to be able to attend any showing of any movie in any theater at any time, to sit anywhere in the movie theater with their family and friends, and to have equal access to the movie soundtrack through high quality captioning that is consistently reliable.

For more information about movie theater captioning, please contact [Teresa Rogers](#).

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

DCMP staff members Bill Stark and Teresa Rogers wrote this article. You may contact them at info@dcmp.org.