

To AMC President,

This past Friday, July 12, 2002, I attended the 9:30 showing of Bourne Identity at AMC Fenway 13 Theater in Boston. I bought the ticket from cashier 9831 at station 003 at 20:21 with a credit card so you should be able to check your records to verify it.

Approximately 35 minutes into the movie, I suddenly felt hot all over and began sweating profusely. I was very worried since I am in excellent health. I left the theater to the restroom. As I started walking, I worried I was going to collapse and die in the theater. I felt a little better when I left the theater but I still felt so ill that I told the ticket attendants before the bathroom to look for me if I did not emerge in 5 minutes. I sat down in the stall for a moment and had diarrhea all the sudden. As I rested and felt sweat pouring down my face and arms, I grew very scared, fearing I had been a recipient of some chemical or biological terrorist attack, or maybe Ebola had somehow come to the United States. I was regretting not completing my will that day. Eventually I returned to the theater, trying to decide if I should ask my friends to take me to an emergency room. I sat down in my seat to try and think. After that, the symptoms started returning. I was sweating but dizzy. Again I left my seat. I went to the rear of the theater and stood for a while. I gradually felt better and better, so I decided to sit on the floor and watched the rest of the movie from the ramp into the theater.

When the movie finished, I waited for my friends. They were curious why I had not watched. I told them what happened and much to my surprise one of the other members of our party had the exact same experience. It was kind of amusing because he had watched the movie from the floor on the opposite side of the theater.

At this point I realized that there was some general problem. I was not subject of some terrorist attack. The air quality seemed fine in the theater. I thought back and remembered some of the things that had seemed to make the situation worse: I remember closing my eyes for a period during the movie because the camera was panning (circling) around the scenes. Then I remembered being annoyed about being in the front row. At this point I realized the problem: I was the victim of space motion sickness, induced by the visual perception of angular accelerations. Having worked in the manned vehicle laboratory at MIT I had read about space motion sickness. These effects were greatly accentuated/exaggerated by being seated in the front row, which is simply a matter of geometry: Something moving 3 feet across the screen seen by someone 10 feet away vs 30 feet away in the same amount of time appears as if it has much greater angular acceleration. When I recovered and watched the movie from the rear of the theater I ceased to feel I was going to die and actually began to enjoy the last part of the film that I was able to watch.

Basically, I feel that AMC Fenway 13 is responsible for putting me through a near death experience. That is the only way to describe how I felt. I worried what would happen to my things if I died and how my family would be impacted. How is AMC Fenway 13 responsible? AMC Fenway 13 should have researched space motion sickness and built its theater to minimize the possibility of its occurrence. 2 people in 1 sitting going through the same thing is enough evidence that AMC Fenway 13 should not have built seats so close to the screen. I realize that the real estate is expensive and that AMC Fenway 13 wants to pack its theaters to maximize profits. This is understandable. However, AMC Fenway 13 charges premium prices for its movies and customers have a right to expect a premium experience in exchange. I am confident that AMC Fenway 13 theater design which required me to

sit so close to the screen, caused me to be ill. As soon as I moved back and sat on the floor, I rapidly recovered, as did the other individual in the party.

I want several things from AMC Fenway 13 Theater. Despite the relief when I realized I was not going to die and could even watch the end of the movie, this was a terrible experience for me. I have never felt I was going to die before and it is the worst moment I have had in my life. I think to say that the sensations and my reaction and fear were unwarranted would be a false assumption; I am not prone to illnesses of any kind and have never felt space motion sickness before, so from my point of view this had to be something very serious. If the theater design with seats so close to the screen was a mistake then AMC Fenway 13 should not sell seats so close to the screen. Perhaps a compromise would be to treat the front rows separately and to warn customers in those rows of this possibility and the symptoms and sell tickets severely discounted in those rows. If I had been aware of these symptoms, I would never have bought a ticket I was going to die. I like movies, so beyond acknowledging the problem as some of the ideas above, for me personally a non-transferrable lifetime pass or something, would be a no-cost way for AMC Fenway 13 to compensate me for what I went through.

-- Thank you.
Tom

Thomas [REDACTED], (MIT '93,94,00)
PhD student, MIT Research Laboratory of Electronics
Captain, USAF Reserve, Air Force Research Laboratory
Electromagnetic Scattering Computation
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]