

MOVIES AT HOME

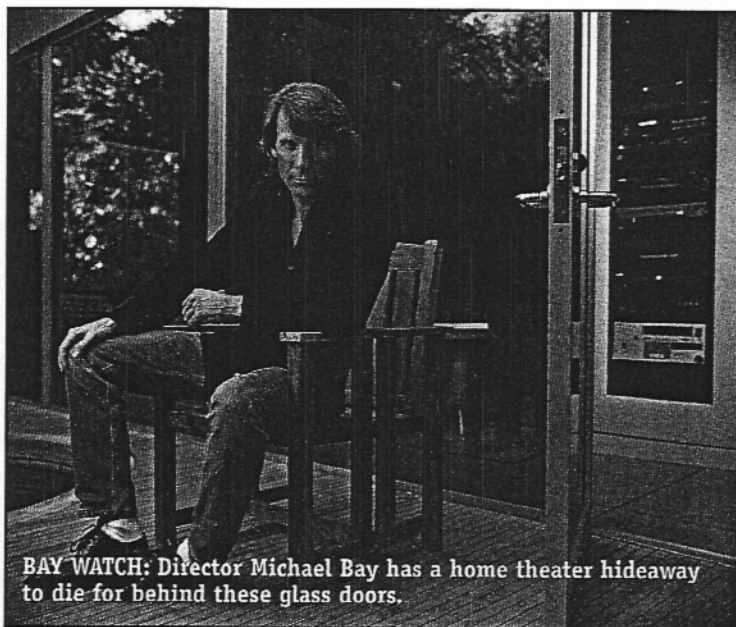
home theater

Like his movies, director Michael Bay's home theater system blows away just about everyone else's.

Bigger & Better

EVERYTHING YOU HEAR OR READ ABOUT DIRECTOR

MICHAEL BAY claims that everything about him is bigger and better than the next guy. There's his 200-pound mastiff, his brawny black GMC Yukon, his snazzed-up Nike commercials, his deal at Fox for the upcoming FBI series "Quantico," and—most importantly—his big-budget, big-screen hits: *The Rock*, box office \$332 million worldwide, and *Armageddon*, \$430 million worldwide and still counting. There's also his 5,000-square-foot Brentwood home—complete with boulders and Japanese maples he had craned in to line the pathway up to his front door, the deck out back that's surrounded by giant eucalyptus trees, the secluded pool and the guest house that he's had converted into a home theater. Inside this theater, two deep, plush couches face a massive Stuart 10-foot-by-10-foot pull-down projection screen, and filling up the rest of the room is all the latest—and loudest—equipment a guy can buy: seven surround sound JBL speakers, JBL digital surround sound processor, Faroudja line doubler, Sony DVD player, Sony VCR, Sony digital satellite receiver, Pioneer laser disc player and Sonance power distributor. "The first time I discovered home theater I was buying a phone at the Good Guys," reminisces the six-foot-two Bay (yup, he's taller than most people, too). "They were playing *Terminator 2* and I'm like, 'Oh my God, I need it.' So I got a starter kit. I spent, I think, \$11,000." After *The Rock* and *Armageddon*, Disney was happy



BAY WATCH: Director Michael Bay has a home theater hideaway to die for behind these glass doors.

to outfit Bay with his current setup, which cost 10 times his first system. "They gave me the guys that did Ovitz's room and Katzenberg's room. They're not cheap."

One DVD likely to debut soon in Bay's home theater is his very own *Armageddon*. He feels so strongly about the importance of home entertainment that he made sure his deal at Disney included final technical approval for videotape, laser disc and DVD transfers. "They said the only person that ever got that is James Cameron. I went, 'Well, I'd rather throw away all this money than for me to work a year of my life and you to just... get it out there.'" With all the cool things certain to be on the *Armageddon* DVD—like the Aerosmith music video for "I Don't Want to Miss a Thing"—one of the coolest things about it will be what isn't on it: nary a smirk from star Bruce Willis. How did Bay get Willis to perform so consistently sans smirk? "I studied all his movies, and I made sure that every time I used him in a scene, I had more

coverage." Which brings us to Bay's philosophy about dealing with willful superstars in general—"To me, it's just, wear 'em down. Because when I stand firm on something, I really get my way."

Although Bay assures us that most nights he spends in his home theater it's just him, some Häagen-Dazs, his dog and the volume cranked way up high, it's so cozy in here that the place must figure prominently, too, in the 35-year-old bachelor's dating rituals. "Yes,

it's part of the courting process," he grins. "A very important part of the courting process. That's why there's a long, comfy couch. Comfy blanket. Comfy pillows."

"But I've already courted, so I'm taken right now," he adds, referring to his girlfriend, Jaime Bergman, a former rodeo barrel racer. Does he usually stick to watching macho action fare like the films he makes, or can he get into, say, *The Black Stallion*? "I love *The Black Stallion*, it's such a beautiful movie," he says, then rattles off other favorites in his disc library—*Seven*, *Dr. Strangelove*, *The Graduate*, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* and *Reservoir Dogs*. Any memorable experiences he's had in this room lately? "I watched *The Devil's Advocate* here. It's scary, the sound is very loud. When that woman [Tamara Tunie] lifted her dress up and the face came out of it or whatever, that scared the shit out of me. I'm getting chills right now because I remember sitting here going, 'Oh my God!' by myself at 12 o'clock at night."

—Wolf Schneider

PHOTOGRAPH BY DANIEL RAY