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The Digital Man Sits Down

Back in the office, Barry tries to find a seat as comfortable as his directing saddle

By Barry Sonnenfeld



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Almost every on-set photograph of a movie director is the same: He (or she) has a headset around his neck that makes it look like he's got a goiter, a baseball cap on his head, and he's sitting in a long-legged canvas director's chair with his name stitched on the back.

Not me. I wear a mono earbud, which lets me hear the actors being miked in one ear and the crew making fun of me in the other, and I prefer the more arcane look of a cowboy hat. (Emma Thompson gave me the jaunty Scottish hat and scarf I'm wearing in the photo.)

And since I am often in

profound pain from sciatica due to unconscious narcissistic rage, I just can't sit on one of those nonsupportive director's chairs. Knowing this — and my love of all things cowboy except for real horses — a decade ago the film crew of *Men in Black 2* gave me a saddle mounted on an apple box. (Tommy Lee Jones, who isn't afraid of real horses, constantly reminds me that I am sitting on a boy's saddle, but he went to Harvard, so what does he know?) Over the years, we've modified the system, so I now have many, many wheels (even an apple-box horse can throw you if you skittle across the set fast enough) as well as drawers for scripts, water, and prescription medication. It's the perfect chair.

Now that I'm in the editing room, I'm looking for a cool desk chair. I couldn't get used to the inflated rubber ball; it kept throwing me. I also tried the **[1] Herman Miller Embody chair** (\$1,199; store.hermanmiller.com; see images below), which has adjustable arms and the ability to lengthen your thigh support, and, of course, the almost de rigueur **[2] Aeron chair** (\$869; store.hermanmiller.com). However, the most comfortable and versatile chair I found is, ironically, the **[3] saddle chair from HÅG Capisco by izzy+** (\$1,090; ergodepot.com). The saddlelike shape allows my legs to spread out in a manly way. My back is supported, and I sit up very straight with my legs directly beneath my body. The chair can also rise nearly ten inches, from desk height to what is almost a standing position. Options include a fine platform, which allows your legs to swivel with the chair and gives you a boost when it's time to stand up. You can sit sidesaddle or face backward, resting your hands on the wings spread out from the back of the chair. What I really enjoy is having meetings in which I sit at the chair's highest point, my arms resting on the supportive wings, pretending I've just stopped my horse to chat about *MIB*'s foreign distribution.

To go along with my new chair, I also tested Herman Miller's excellent adjustable desk, the **[4] Envelop**. (The one I used is sold only commercially but will hopefully be made widely available sometime in 2012. Until then, Herman Miller has a similar version for \$960 with the same sliding desktop.) Using electronic controls, you can raise it from practically the height of a sit-on-the-floor sushi table to something you can comfortably stand behind. The front has a curved indentation that feels like a cocoon around your body. It also bends forward, allowing your arms to rest on an incline while keeping your computer — and martini — level.

According to Kamil, my stepdaughter's husband and a voracious *New York Times* health-section reader, sitting is not healthy. He's almost convinced me to stand at my desk. Now that I have the saddle chair, I don't have to do that. With it and the Envelop set to maximum height, I feel like I'm standing when I'm actually sitting down. All I have to do is keep from falling off.



1. You can adjust the seat depth of the Embody chair to accommodate the length of your thighs.
2. The ubiquitous Aeron chair supports the natural lean of your pelvis. Plus, it's pretty.
3. The Capisco saddle chair has indentations on the side that can make you feel like you're riding a comfortable, plush horse.
4. Herman Miller's Envelop desk slides into your body, surrounding it for optimal ergonomics.

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Barry Sonnenfeld is an Emmy-winning television director and the director of Get Shorty and the upcoming Men in Black 3.

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