

## New Streaming Site Fandor is an Indie Netflix With a Personal Touch

By Nathan Adams

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Indie film producer Ted Hope and former high-ranking Facebook employee Chris Kelly have joined the board of a new website that allows users to stream from a library of indie



and art films. I guess that's a sign that people think this thing's going to go places. At first glance Fandor might seem like it is a redundant service, given the existence of Netflix and Amazon, but upon inspection it actually takes a number of innovative approaches that make it an interesting new content provider to watch.

The idea of making the online movie watching experience more social isn't a new one; people have been tossing it around for a while. Netflix used to have more of a social platform built into it's site, but they could never really figure out what they wanted to do with it, and ultimately stripped most of it away. It was just announced that *The Dark Knight* will become the first movie available to stream on Facebook, and I think the answer to making online movie watching more social is right there. Netflix shouldn't have stumbled around trying to figure out their own social platform, they should have concentrated on integrating their service deeply with Facebook. One of the creators of Fandor, Jonathan Marlow, says, "Some have embraced the notion of inventing the Facebook of movies. We realized Facebook was the Facebook of movies."

Coming on the heels of the Warner Bros. and Facebook partnership, that couldn't be more right. What Fandor does is deeply integrate with the social platform that people already have and use the most. You can easily sign in to the Fandor page with Facebook Connect, and there are built in ways to comment on the films you are watching and have it post to your Facebook profile, and there is a service called BlipSnips that will allow you to share your favorite clips with friends. Instead of trying to convince users to create and cultivate an entirely new social profile, Fandor is piggybacking off what Facebook has already created.

Another way that Fandor is separating itself from Netflix is through the films that it provides access to. Unlike Netflix, which tries to be the one stop shopping big box store of the film-streaming world, Fandor only has a library of 2,500 movies. What separates them from the indie films that Netflix or Amazon offer is that they are all chosen as Fandor films for very specific reasons. A movie has to have some sort of

merit or significance in the eyes of those in charge of the site in order to get inclusion. It's a brand building technique that is being likened to a carefully curated film festival. And once you start watching things, Fandor will start recommending other films to you, but not through the use of algorithms like those other sites. An actual person will look over what you like and make recommendations to you. In addition to this, the site will house in depth essays that dissect the films Fandor has chosen to host, and users are encouraged to jump into the subsequent discussions that will go on in a comments section. Hope says of the site's goals, "Anything we can do to improve the access to film brings us closer together with others. That's the dream, my friends."

Fandor is currently offering a free one-month trial membership. After that, being a member will cost you \$10 a month. Already the site streams to your TV through Boxee, and I imagine if things take off, collaborations with other streaming capable systems will follow. Just a small tip, signing up for the free month will, of course, lead to you having to cancel your membership in order to not get charged for month two, but when checking out the website I found out that you can watch one free movie just from signing in with your Facebook profile. That should give you some incentive to give them a chance. A free movie, what's better? Anybody gonna do it?