



Fandor Launches As 'Netflix for Indie Films'

By Mark Hachman

March 9, 2011



Fandor, a Web site that pitches itself as a sort of Netflix for independent films, launched Wednesday with an eye toward attracting the more nuanced film fan.

Although the site will charge \$10 per month for its library of 2,000 to 2,500 films, Fandor users can watch the first film on the site for free, provided they log in with their Facebook account. That, in part, is due to ex-Facebooker Chris Kelly, who sits on the Fandor's board.

Although networks like the Sundance Channel and others cater to indie film viewers, Montgomery Kosma, the chief operating officer of Fandor, say their films are curated for a reason, with each existing on the site for a reason. *Dogtooth*, a Greek film that was nominated for an Academy Award, is there, as is *The Hitch-Hiker*, one of the first movies about hostage-taking by filmmaker Ida Lupino.

"For us, curation and discovery is part of the search for movies," Kosma said. "[The selection] is not backed by mass-market Hollywood marketing machine. Instead, we look for and listen to critical acclaim."

"The question is, is something good enough to be in our library?" Kosma added.

Naturally, the site has a blog dedicated to specific films or film makers, with topics like "Essential Viewing: Do-It-Yourself Auteurs" by Roger Ebert, and "All Singing! All Dancing! All Crazy!! The Weirdest Hollywood Musicals." And, of course, commentary on the Academy Awards.



With the exception of *Dogtooth*, Fandor hasn't attracted the numerous foreign films, for example, that vie for the title of "Best Foreign Film" each holiday season. However, Kosman said that the site is making a concerted effort to attract short

films, both documentary and fiction. "There are so many powerful short stories out there," Kosma said.

And so how does Kosma and Fandor attract these filmmakers? By paying them. The site anonymously watches what people are paying attention to, and what films they're watching. Half of every dollar of revenue the site takes in goes into a pool; the pool is divided up according to the proportion of minutes users spend watching a given film. According to Kosma, shorts take up a large share, although Dogtooth and other nominated films would probably record a higher proportion of interest during festivals or awards shows, he said.

Naturally, the influence of Facebook goes beyond simply the login promotion. Users are encouraged to share Fandor-hosted movie clips on Facebook, to other Fandor users, and those that aren't already enrolled on the site can watch the first movie via their login, or pay for the service.

"The idea is to make it very easy to get on the service," Kosma said.