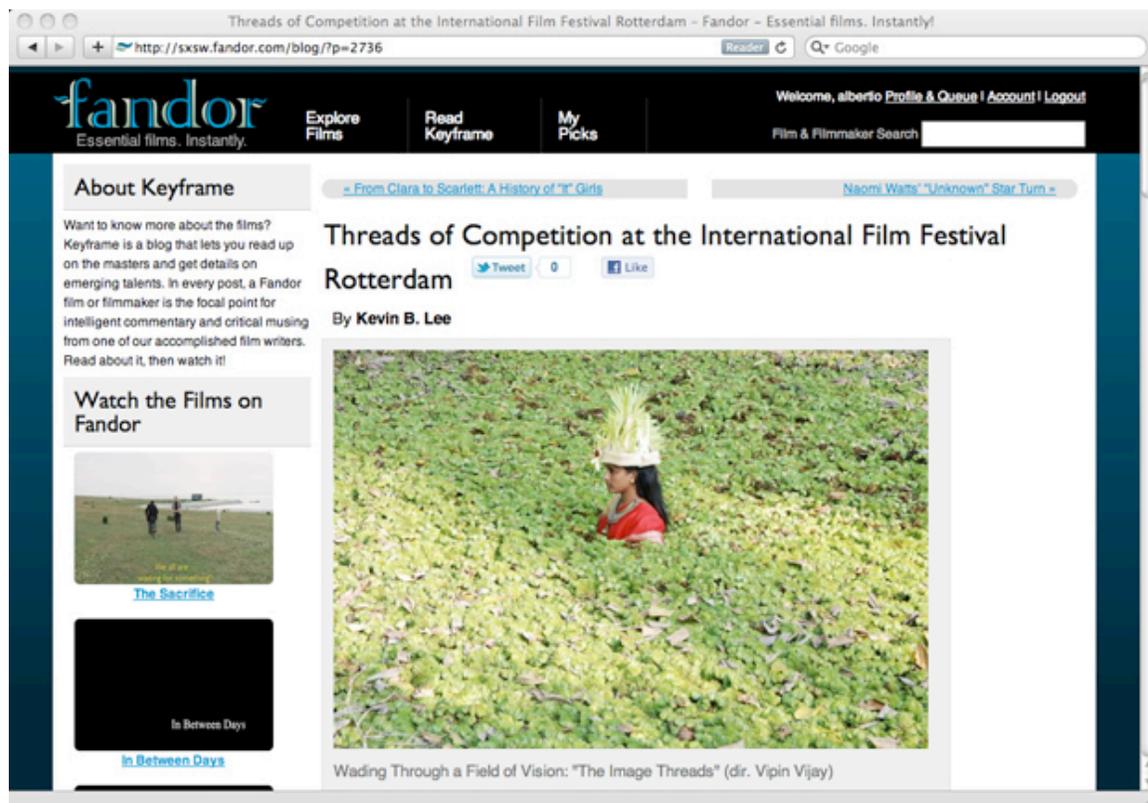


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New Film Site Fandor: A Cross Between Sundance and Netflix, Only Smaller

By Tim Appelo
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On Wednesday, the film streaming site Fandor launches a bold plan to transform indie film with the help of Facebook -- and Facebook employee #25, Chris Kelly.



"What the film industry desperately needs is a merger of social networks and content," says **Ted Hope**, the celebrated producer of *American Splendor* and dozens of indie hits at Sundance and elsewhere. That's why he just joined former Facebook chief privacy officer Chris Kelly on the board of Fandor, the indie film streaming site built by **Dan Aronson** and **Jonathan Marlow**, a veteran of Amazon and GreenCine. After several months in beta (trial-run mode), Fandor made its full-fledged debut Wednesday.

Fandor streams about 2,500 films, far fewer than Amazon or Netflix. But instead of having users discover movies through mainstream studio marketing and "people who bought *this* also bought *that*" algorithms, Fandor concentrates on indie (and

international) movies -- no TV -- and relies on human expertise to curate, like a film fest programmer or the proprietor of a great video store like Chicago's Facets or Seattle's Scarecrow Video -- to pick the good ones, from *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari* to the latest, weirdest Oscar-nominated foreign film, *Dogtooth*. "It isn't just a simple algorithm," says Marlow. "It's an actual individual who can distil the reasons *why* you might be interested in the movie." Then you can read learned essays about the films, and plunge into the discussion yourself. For \$10 a month (or a free first-month introductory trial) you can watch all you want on Fandor, and rave (or pan) them with friends on Facebook.

"Some have embraced the notion of inventing the Facebook of movies," says Marlow. "We realized Facebook was the Facebook of movies." In another big Fandor news event of March 9, you can now share your favorite clips with Facebook friends via the BlipSnips social video tagging service, and watch Fandor films on the web-to-TV gizmo Boxee.

But wait a minute. Boxee also streams films from Netflix, Vudu, and Mubi -- the latter being perhaps the most Fandor-like rival streaming site. Aronson isn't worried. "Mubi is primarily focused the European market," says Aronson, Fandor's chief technical officer. "We feel the model and services we will provide and relationships we're creating in the industry will allow us to be successful."

"Right now the main discovery mechanism for movies is studio ad dollars," says Hope. "But what we value most is our friends and family." Fandor and Facebook, he thinks, are a more efficient and reliable way to discover what you really want to see. And there's a further benefit beyond great movies themselves. "Anything we can do to improve the access to film brings us closer together with others. That's the dream, my friends."