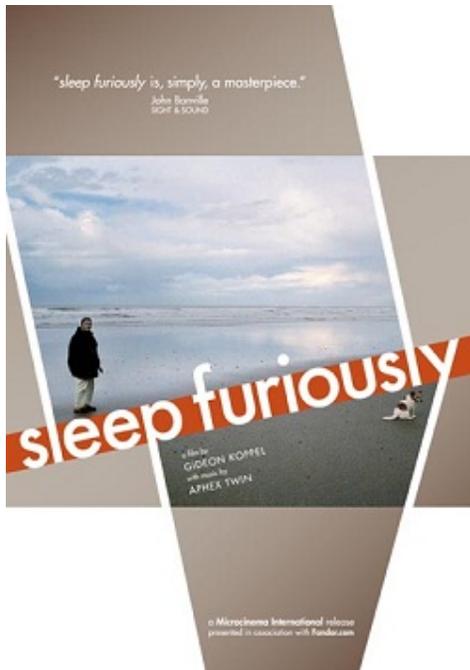




## Fandor: *Sleep Furiously* (2008): Interview with Jonathan Marlow

By Michael Guillen

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On Friday, July 29, 2011, Fandor presented the digital premiere of the acclaimed Welsh documentary *sleep furiously* (2008) in coordination with its U.S. theatrical release. *sleep furiously* debuted in the UK last year, receiving overwhelming praise from British critics and audiences alike. This visually melodic film, directed by Gideon Koppel and featuring music by Aphex Twin, takes viewers on an enchanting exploration of a small farming community in Wales attempting to preserve their traditions. For those who didn't take advantage of Fandor's involvement, *sleep furiously* continues its run at Cinema Village, New York.

Over lunch at Ducca's in San Francisco, Jonathan Marlow and I discussed Fandor's coordinated premiere with Cinema Village. Along with Dan Aronson, Chairman and CEO of Fandor, and Albert Reinhardt, Vice President of Product, Jonathan co-founded Fandor and became its Vice President of Content Development and Acquisitions. He is a cinematographer, critic, curator and composer with over two dozen short films to his credit. In addition to his career in the arts, Jonathan has worked at Amazon.com, Vudu and the DVD/VOD service GreenCine. He was recently Executive Director of the San Francisco Cinematheque and regularly presents rare film screenings throughout the country.

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**Michael Guillén:** Jonathan, let's talk about Fandor's digital premiere of Gideon Koppel's acclaimed Welsh documentary *sleep furiously*, which you offered on Fandor for 24 hours concurrent with the film's theatrical premiere at Cinema Village in New York. This is the second time Fandor has coordinated such an event?

Jonathan Marlow: *David Holzman's Diary* (1967) was the start of what we call the coordinated premiere. In both cases thus far they have been films that have opened

in New York. That won't always be the case; but--at least for these first two--that's been what's happened. *David Holzman's Diary* premiered at MoMA. I had always wanted our first coordinated premiere to be a collaboration with Kino-Lorber because one of the initial conversations we had with Kino-Lorber when we were starting Fandor was with Don Krim. However that conversation would have gone would have dictated whether Fandor was even an idea worth pursuing.

So when Kino-Lorber acquired Jim McBride's film, I hoped they would allow it to be Fandor's first coordinated premiere and they agreed. We had the benefit of it being a reissue. If it had been at another venue like the Film Forum, it would have been difficult to do it because Film Forum is particular about films being online while they're in the theater. If it had been a new film, it also wouldn't have been as easy to do a test run of this notion of the coordinated premiere. *sleep furiously*, however, is a new film, at least for the U.S. It's never been released theatrically in the U.S. We're partnering with Microcinema International for this one.

*sleep furiously* is a film that Tom Luddy brought to my attention. It played at Telluride in 2009; but--though I'd been going every year up to that point--I wasn't able to go that year because I was speaking at a conference in Boston. After the festival, Tom said to me, "I have this film. I think you'd like it." Normally if Tom Luddy says that to you, you should look at it, so I did and he was absolutely right. *sleep furiously* is an amazing film. We showed it as the closing night film at San Francisco Cinematheque's first Crossroads program.

After we screened *sleep furiously* at Crossroads while I was still Executive Director for the Cinematheque, the filmmaker Gideon Koppel--who was having no luck finding U.S. distribution--suggested that he would just give me the film (I had the 35mm print of the film for the screening in San Francisco) and encouraged me to show the film where I could and keep whatever money the film earned through ticket sales. *Sweetgrass* had been picked up by Cinema Guild and--although the similarities between the two films are minor--a number of distributors had passed on the film arguing *sleep furiously* was just too similar in tone to *Sweetgrass*. I felt uncomfortable with Koeppel's suggestion from the beginning and I told him there was no way I would keep the money earned from screening the film.

### **Guillén: What an odd suggestion on his part.**

Marlow: He just wanted people to see his film and had no way to hire someone to distribute it. Since no one had agreed to acquire it, he was hoping this would be a way to get it seen. A number of small cinematheques throughout the U.S. had expressed interest in the film so he sent me that list and asked, "Would you be willing to act as the go-between?" What I told him at that point was that I was just starting Fandor, I was still running the Cinematheque, and had quite a lot going on.

So I took it to Joel Bachar at Microcinema International and told them, "I know you've never done a theatrical release before, but I would like you to take a look at

this film and tell me what you think of it." To me, it seemed perfect for them. Most of the work that Microcinema International has distributed thus far has been artistic and they have a strong working relationship with museums and do a lot of business with educational institutions. They seemed, in many respects, the perfect distributor for this film. Fortunately, Joel--who I've known for many years--agreed that it was a film that would work well for them and agreed to take this on.

The process has taken a lot longer than I would have hoped. The Crossroads screening was in March of last year and here it is July 2011 when we're finally getting it out. I pulled a number of favors from people who I'm reluctant to take advantage of but I knew they would be perfect to make this work. For starters, Scott Runcorn (Eviltron) who designed the compelling poster, and Sylvia Savadjian, the publicist in New York working on the film's release at Cinema Village. Incidentally, Sylvia used to work for Kino. Based on the efforts of Scott, Sylvia, and a bunch of other folks, there's coverage of the first-ever theatrical release of *sleep furiously* in the *Village Voice*, in the *New York Times*, and *Time Out: New York*. Basically, everything I had hoped would happen has happened. Not only is attention being given to the film, but also to our efforts at Fandor. More, in fact, than we've ever had before.

We were initially going to launch Fandor at Toronto last year, but we weren't ready so we pushed it off. The next ideal opportunity was South by Southwest in March of this year. In the three full months of service after we launched, all of our marketing efforts have been industry focus, for a number of reasons that aren't really worth going into, but *sleep furiously* is the beginning of an outward-facing consumer focus.

**Guillén: Help me understand a bit more the value of the coordinated premiere where a film is watched in-cinema with a paid ticket and online for a day with a subscription to Fandor? Why this strategy?**

Marlow: With the notion of the coordinated premiere, there are as many permutations of how we coordinate the premiere as there are films that could potentially participate. In the case of *David Holzman's Diary*, the day the week's screening began at MoMA, Fandor made it available online and it's been online ever since. For *sleep furiously*, it's available for 24 hours on just opening day. It's a limited availability intent on creating more visibility for the duration of the film's theatrical run at Cinema Village, which will be at least a week, hopefully more. An important component of this is that there is a companion film *A Sketchbook for the Library Van* that Gideon Koepfel made in order to raise the money to make *sleep furiously*. *sleep furiously*'s original title had been *The Library Van*. *A Sketchbook* exhibits the notion of getting on film a rough draft of what would then become the feature. A number of the same people are in it, though it's more of a talking head piece than *sleep furiously*. A lot of people are filmed against a backdrop and they talk directly into the camera, but the tone of the piece is very similar to the tone of *sleep furiously*, and it's filmed in black-and-white. The important thing is that--throughout the duration of *sleep furiously*'s theatrical run--Fandor would be the only place you

could see the companion film. Fandor's strategy is to get materials into the cinemas where *sleep furiously* is screening so audiences will become aware of this related effort. The marketing folks would say, "Watch it for free on Fandor" but I'm uncomfortable with that notion of "free." It isn't really free. It's free for the viewer; but, it's something Fandor pays for. Fandor pays the distributor Microcinema who, in turn, pays Gideon Koeppel the director, to make these films available online.

**Guillén: That misleading lure of offering films online "for free" is an obvious kneejerk response to the broader issue of how audiences are understanding or negotiating the concept of streaming cinema in the first place.**

Marlow: Correct.

**Guillén: What is the market value of streaming cinema?**

Marlow: That remains to be seen.

**Guillén: But for now you're promoting the film, raising awareness of Fandor, and providing the added value of a companion film, comparable to the commentaries made available on a DVD release?**

Marlow: Along with the companion film, Fandor's blog Keyframe is offering a number of pieces on *sleep furiously*. There's an interview with Gideon Koppel, for instance. Kevin Lee has been creating visual essays (one and two), a variation of his video essays. It's been challenging to promote *sleep furiously*. There's no main narrator to guide the audience in any particular direction. I'm the ideal audience for *sleep furiously*. It may be difficult for other people but I don't really believe in the idea of difficult films, which you can probably tell from the films that are currently in the Fandor library.

**Guillén: I'm tired of the meta-conversation of what is or is not a difficult film and whether it should or should not be watched. I think people should watch what they want to watch and make up their own minds or--as the current meme poses it--decide for yourself if you want to eat your vegetables or not eat your vegetables. We're not at our mother's tables, for crying out loud, and anyone who starts lecturing me about the vegetables I should or should not be eating deserves to have them hurled at them.**

Marlow: Oh that, yes. Welcome to a false debate. What's happening with the whole video industry at the moment is, in some respects, very liberating. I remember when I saw Godard's *Film Socialisme* at Cannes, the immediate reaction from the critics that I talked to was that the film would be an undistributable movie in the U.S. But now it's going to be the San Francisco Film Society's opening entry for Film Society Cinema at New People. The moment it was announced that Kino-Lorber had picked it up, I wrote a note to Richard Lorber reiterating that same story and congratulating him on proving them wrong. Or for that matter, Cinema Guild picking

up Bela Tarr's *The Turin Horse*. When it played at Berlin, people booed it, then it wound up winning an award, but remained undistributed until Cinema Guild stepped in and made the decision to embrace it. By now this notion of difficult films not finding a place has actually been inverted. It now appears that difficult films have more of a livelihood than they did even a few years ago. There are now expanded opportunities of distribution that aren't just connected to releasing something on DVD.

**Guillén: Can you speak to Fandor's strategy regarding how they've built their inventory and your creative choices deciding what Fandor would be? Which libraries you wanted to solicit?**

Marlow: To fully address that, I would have to step back to the founding premise behind the DVD service that was GreenCine. At GreenCine I was particular about saying that I wasn't an arbiter of taste. If someone wanted to make their film available online as an extension of GreenCine's rent-by-mail service, I wasn't going to stop it or stand in the way of it, provided there was no infringement in the work someone was trying to license to us. If it was clear that they had the rights to use the images and the music, and the actors had signed releases to appear, I would accept anything.

Ultimately, that meant we had quite a few films that I thought were pretty awful and it made the average viewer feel there was a lot of clutter they had to wade through in order to find anything that they actually wanted to watch. Granted, there are editorial ways to get out of that conundrum; but, nonetheless the instinct is to look through everything that was there, which included many poorly-made poorly-acted genre films. The few really great things that were there would get lost. So when we were establishing Fandor, it was clear to me that what was essential at this time wasn't providing access to everything but actually having a curatorial voice. What is it that film festivals bring to a city when they have their two weeks or--in the case of Seattle--their 3½ weeks? Or at Telluride, a weekend? What do these festivals bring to their communities? If they're any good, they bring through that experience their own voice of what they think people should see.

At this point, there are plenty of other opportunities to see films. When GreenCine started, it was before Netflix had a VOD service. In some ways, it made sense to take the approach of just putting anything up online; but, now there are many opportunities to watch film online and so it makes sense to do the opposite and to have the selection strongly curated. As I mentioned before, the very first conversation I had--outside of with Fandor's founders about what Fandor should be and what it could become--was with Don Krim and Reid Rossman at Kino International, before they merged with Richard Lorber. I knew they had to represent the core and the foundation of Fandor's library and that--out of that--things could expand. Initially, I knew it would be difficult to convince Criterion and Janus Films, for instance, to be involved because they had already had a relationship

with the site formerly known as The Auteurs and had soured on the digital experience.

**Guillén: Isn't Criterion now with Hulu Plus?**

Marlow: They have an exclusive relationship for subscription through Hulu, yes, that's correct. Although now that Hulu is for sale, it's anyone's guess whether the buyer will want to exclusively focus on episodic television or whether they'll be interested in what Criterion offers. So, we'll see what happens with that relationship. Anyway, Criterion is an important player in this space. They have some of the greatest films ever made. But Fandor also has some of the greatest films ever made and, in all honesty, if you look through the titles that we've been able to license through our current partners--which is difficult because there's a significant lag between the number of titles we've licensed and the number of films that are currently available on the service--but right now there's over 500 films you can watch on Fandor and we have licensed almost 3000.

**Guillén: Doesn't that call for a "Coming Attractions" sidebar at Fandor?**

Marlow: We have one in our office but not one that we've shared with the outside world just yet. Eventually, we will.

**Guillén: That would be an important step.**

Marlow: It would be an important step. We've done it in selective ways. *sleep furiously* is one of those. We were able to promote that it was going to become available on the 29th of July.

**Guillén: I'm intrigued by how services like Fandor come into their own presence or, for that matter, how streaming has gained credence as a spectatorial option. I'll be honest, I never once watched any of the VOD content on GreenCine. I just had no interest in watching films on my computer. It wasn't until I learned how to channel Netflix Instant Watch through my PS3 player to my television that I even entertained the notion of streaming films. It required a more comfortable viewing experience for me to do so and definitely a larger screen. But now the issue is visual quality. I subscribed to Hulu Plus for about a month and then canceled my subscription because I hated the commercial interruptions, however "limited", but especially hated the juddering images and buffering delays. With Fandor, however, I've seen much less of that. What allows for a clean streaming experience? Is it bandwidth?**

Marlow: That speaks, in part, to why Fandor does have a lag between licensing films and getting them up online. We are more particular than most about the quality of the experience. We don't always work with the same quality of source materials as Netflix or Hulu. Particularly when you're dealing with episodic television, which is

often times--depending on the show--shot, edited and delivered digitally. For most of the films Fandor has licensed so far, they're usually shot on film and delivered digitally and so the variety of quality is pretty broad. From the beginning, Fandor brought in folks I had worked with at Vudu who I knew could do this better than anyone; which is, to replicate the source material as closely as possible. A number of separate streams are required to address bandwidth issues. They transparently adjust the stream without any buffering. I come from this background of doing what I do and have done for quite some time whereas my business partners come from a technology background and I knew that they could fix that issue most people experience when they watch films online, which is that often times it is a horrible experience. It's always amazing to me when I look at Netflix how poor the quality is for a number of films and then other times how amazing the quality can be.

**Guillén: You've mentioned something that has come to the foreground of my thinking lately, largely based on a criticism made by *Variety* critic Robert Koehler that a certain festival we were discussing merely programmed films but did not curate them. That made me realize that I was not as certain as I thought I was about the distinction between the two. What are your thoughts on the difference between programming and curating films?**

Marlow: In my role at Fandor I do both because we have something we consider unique--until someone else decides to copy it--and that is the Fandor Channel. One thing I knew would always be a problem with films that are not as well-known as the films released by the studios is that the technology you're complaining about and this issue of creating an ideal uninterrupted experience. This is something that Hulu is not good at because of the commercial component at their site, which makes it--I would argue--an unattractive partner for Criterion. The technology problem is one that can be solved. It's the easy problem. Which is that it's not really easy, necessarily, it's actually complicated, but if you throw enough money at the issue, you can solve that problem. The bigger and more consequential problem is how do you get people to care about the work?

Netflix made a decision that allowed Fandor to exist. They looked at the titles that they were licensing differently for Instant Watch than their DVD library. They recognized--and for them it was a sensible business decision--that it was easier for them and for their audience if they went after films that were already relatively well-known, which relates to this misnomer of the queue strength. It's a popularity contest. If there are enough people that are interested in a film, that's something that is attractive to Netflix. In other words, Netflix doesn't want to create an audience for a film. They don't want to go out of their way to generate interest in a film. They would rather latch on to the marketing mechanism that's already in place and that's already making people aware of a film. A film that's released theatrically on 3000+ screens is more attractive than a film that only plays in a few cities and doesn't get written about very much. The Fandor Channel is theoretically a mechanism to help the audiences discover the films in the library in a format that they already understand, which is television. Rather than have to make a choice,

they can sit back and allow the programming to exist. It's also in a snapshot an easy way to access the schedule, which goes out for five days. You can look at the programming schedule and get a pretty good grasp graphically of what the library's about and what Fandor is about. That was always the intent. It's more important to me that people use the Channel as a discovery tool than they use it to actually watch films. Although, as it turns out, people actually do watch films through the Channel.

**Guillén: I have! And for all the reasons you've cited. I approached Fandor cautiously when I first learned about it and the Fandor Channel caught my attention in much the same way that I can turn on my television, turn to the Turner Classic Movies network, and watch whatever is playing at the moment, because I trust the programming.**

Marlow: Turner Classic Movies was the inspiration for the Fandor Channel!

**Guillén: I would say that 50-60% of the time when I switch channels to TCM, I will start watching whatever's on. If I were to have to choose from TCM's library of titles, I might never choose what I happen to land on when I switch channels.**

Marlow: I like to use the video store analogy. If you walk in to a good video store like Scarecrow in Seattle or Le Video here in San Francisco or Facets in Chicago, there's a certain personality that will go in to a store that has a great selection and be overwhelmed and find it impossible to make a decision. That person generally will gravitate to the new releases area. That's essentially what the Fandor Channel is for the casual cinephile, though I'm hesitant to use that term. The difference between programming and curating is that as a curator, or as a curated library, I'm trying to find films for Fandor that cover as broad a spectrum as possible but they all have to meet a minimum quality. In other words, there are films on Fandor that I personally don't like but I believe that there's a reason for them to be there. They fulfill some need in the library. There might be a film that we add because we're weak in a particular area and we feel we need more films of that sort. If there were only films that appealed to me in this service, there would be these three-hour boring movies that are subtitled. That would be it! And who would subscribe to that? Me, and maybe you.

**Guillén: It would be all vegetables and no meat.**

Marlow: Or maybe all meat and no vegetables. Everyone has their own personal taste. Curation stands outside of personal taste, if you do it right.

**Guillén: Are you saying there's an educational initiative within curation?**

Marlow: Sure, there's a bit of that. If you look at the cross-section of Fandor, it's independent, international, it's narrative and documentary, it's shorts and features because we're duration agnostic, which is key to Fandor being subscription rather

than pay-per-view or transactional. If you look at the list of genres, for example--which was originally created but never implemented for GreenCine--it's pretty esoteric. It's something that I did in collaboration with someone who had been working at GreenCine at the time, Patrick Matthews, and we had both worked together at Scarecrow where I had operated a movie theater on the second floor.

The advantage of the online universe vs. the physical video store is that you can have films that live in many different places. You can argue that it's a disadvantage at Le Video in the way that they categorize their films because they can't exist in multiple places unless they want to replicate the box art and place them in different sections. Say, for example, they have a directors section for Murnau; do they also need it under International / Germany or do they need it under Silent? It's complicated. We can occupy all of that.

So there is an educational underpinning: the idea that films go back all the way to the 1890s and the beginning of cinema to films that are current and in theaters now. For Fandor to succeed, it needs to occupy multiple realms. It needs to appeal to people who only want to watch new films but it needs to also give them their vegetables. At Greencine we had this concept of what we called the "queue orphan." This is the film that people feel they should watch, but whenever it rises to the top of their queue, they put it back down again because they never actually want to watch it; they feel that at some point in their life they should watch it. An on demand subscription makes that much easier.

**Guillén: You can have it available when you're in the right mood for it?**

Marlow: Yeah. Because the mood is critical. Which is difficult when you're having films mailed to you. Matching the mood to when a film arrives might vary from when you actually put it in your rental queue.

**Guillén: So let me ask you this: if Fandor has curated their library, then the Fandor Channel allows the programming. How is it programmed? How do you decide what plays when? Is it a computerized and random shuffle of the inventory? And once your library develops in the future, will you have guest programmers selecting from the library?**

Marlow: Part of that is already happening. I said earlier that the idea of the Channel conforms to what I get out of Turner Classic Movies. In the early days I referred to Fandor itself but also the Channel as a merge of TCM--even though we don't really have any of their films (though we have films that are like their films)--and the Sundance Channel or IFC before they were owned by CableVision and became Rainbow Media, which is now or about to be the AMC Networks. Back in the day, IFC and The Sundance Channel, particularly when they were totally separate, were competing for the same audience. They would show--especially IFC for that matter--older Japanese films on Saturday mornings and then in the evening the films were more contemporary independent movies, some relatively recent, and some within

the last decade, so that the channels were slotted in that same pattern. Because features are varying lengths, I wanted Fandor to serve as an opportunity to emphasize that we have embraced short films as well. Inbetween all of the features are shorts. Now to be clear, if you look at the Channel, you'll see that the slotting is all thematic. At this point, unlike Now Playing, which is TCM's guide, we don't have a way to express to the viewer the thought behind why certain movies are playing the way that they are. Usually you can tell. Recently, there was an entire day full of possessives. We played all these films that were "somebody's something". It was not easy to program features and shorts that all lined up appropriately as "somebody's something". On other days it might go back and forth between different types of personal pronouns or different themes. There might be a noir day, or during the Silent Film Festival we played an entire day of either silent films or documentaries about silent filmmakers. So that's already happening. The next step, which is critical, is to invite guest programmers to come in and do as you say and what TCM does: invite someone who ideally is not connected to the film business in any direct way, but has an interest in cinema and wants to share that interest with other people. That's what this whole thing is about. It's about wanting to share what we love with other people.

**Guillén: How many partnerships have you struck to help provide content on Fandor?**

Marlow: Before we launched, before March of this year, the entirety of the focus was on distribution companies because it was essential to try and bring in as many films as quickly as possible. When you asked earlier about how I made the decision about which distributor to go after, in many cases it was going after a company that would make my life easier because of the curation process. I wanted to go after companies where I felt were in alignment between their process of what they sign, and my process of what I believe we wanted. There are a number of distributors out there who have libraries that are mainly ... not good. There's no better way to say that, is there?

**Guillén: They're not Fandor-ready.**

Marlow: Which requires us to watch a lot of bad stuff. Like yourself, I have the advantage. I've seen a number of movies. So partners that are useful to me are people who have signed movies that I've seen and liked. When we work with partners that basically have a library of films I've never seen, it takes much longer because I need to watch everything and make a decision. I used to work for Amazon and Amazon differs from Fandor because it's not curated. No one's making decisions in the way that we're making decisions about what we want and don't want to offer. In many cases they've developed a relationship where they'll just take whatever you're willing to give them. That's the original GreenCine model again: let the audience decide. But generally, if you leave it up to the audience they will leave in disgust because they have no guidance. That was part of the reason why I left Amazon: there was no desire to help people find things as it related to films.

Everything was pushed through the structure of books; but, books and movies are very different.

**Guillén: I'm experiencing this at the Hastings in Boise. They have 70,000 DVD titles but they're set up, as you say, like books on shelves. I get overwhelmed, head straight to new releases and don't even deal with the inventory.**

Marlow: But you know most of the inventory. Or to put it another way, they're probably not devoting shelf space to things that you're probably not familiar with. It's already lived its life on their shelf and they've already returned it. Most of what they have that's not in the new release section will be films that they believe the average person would want to buy. That's the model for a physical bookstore. They have to turn those titles and take advantage of and maximize the shelf space. So your strategy of going after new releases is the right one.

But the whole notion behind Fandor is how do we help people find the things that they would otherwise not be aware of? One gateway is to at least provide some foundation of titles that they have some familiarity with. This is part of the disagreement within the office where what I refer to as a supplemental service--we supplement other types of entertainment that you might be looking for. Entertainment is key. The films that we're after don't stay away from entertainment but they're more than merely entertainment, which would be my normal issue with studio releases. They only seek to entertain and they don't look to do anything else. I'm not looking for a painful experience. I'm not looking to force the audience to suffer in some way--although some of the films do that as well--but, I do think a good baseline should be some entertainment and then something more beyond that.

**Guillén: Returning to the curatorial shape of Fandor, how does the site's blog Keyframe play into this?**

Marlow: Well, it harkens back to what was happening with GreenCine and David Hudson. I knew it was important to create advocacy for the work that we were bringing in and there wasn't a lot written about a number of the films we were licensing. One of the things I said earlier was that in the office there's this debate: as a supplemental service, why do we have films that are also on Netflix? About 20% of our library overlaps with Netflix. One of the founding principles of why GreenCine evolved into what it is today and why Fandor is not DVD-rental but purely on demand is that you have to have the core of the titles that draw people in for them to then be able to discover the other titles. If we practiced an exclusionary principle of, "Well, we only care about things that aren't available anywhere else," then we wouldn't have any subscribers at all.

**Guillén: What do you say to the criticism that Fandor is top heavy with silent films?**

Marlow: The silent film aspect is an anomaly that's related to the original encoding team where we just ended up with a lot of silent films, which unfortunately skewed the reception of the library in a direction that's not a real reflection of the library.

**Guillén: I've never thought of the necessity of an encoding team. How many people are on the encoding team?**

Marlow: The whole company is about 20 folks right now. The encoding team, as for any company of this size, could probably stand to include more people. We have other people who are helping that process out. It's not just encoding the film, it's creating the descriptions in many cases if we're not provided descriptions. I wanted to create for our partners the lowest barrier of entry possible. When I was at Vudu, for instance, there was this requirement that they deliver a meta data spreadsheet where all this information was spelled out but given that the partners were Disney, Universal, Paramount, Warner Brothers and Sony, that was no problem for them. They already had that created. They helped make it easy because we could ask for a specific street date and they would say, "This is the date."

For most of the titles that we're dealing with, particularly now that we're working more and more with individual filmmakers and individual producers and not distributors--though we're still getting distributors as well--there's no such date. Whenever it's ready, we can make it available. So we basically need to create arbitrary dates and right now--as opposed to home video--the arbitrary date that we're establishing is not Tuesday (which is what home video does); we're doing Friday, which is the date that the average person in their mind perceives as the date that new movies come out because that's the theatrical date. By and large, most of the library becomes available each week on Fridays so that people can explore them through the weekend.

The advantage of Fandor--at least with my involvement with Fandor--is that when someone asks me what do I like, I say I like anything that's good. Good is open to interpretation; but, my interpretation of good is fairly broad. We don't have any Ed Wood films on the service right now but there's a place on Fandor for Ed Wood, definitely. Not just historically speaking but I think his films are fascinating on many levels; but, they're not in any traditional sense "good."

**Guillén: What's the difference between your coordinated premiere of a theatrical release coupled to online access on Fandor and the already-familiar model of a theatrical release being made concurrently on, let's say, Comcast On Demand?**

Marlow: Primarily the folks that you're talking about that participate in the Comcast partnership would be IFC and Magnolia and those films are available in a transaction model, or what would otherwise be referred to as pay-for-view. So you can either go to the cinema and pay your money for a ticket or you can stay at home and pay your money--often times less money but sometimes more money....

**Guillén: Usually more money for less picture. Films are frequently reformatted for the television screen. That's why I grew to hate Comcast On Demand.**

Marlow: There's a certain advantage for people who don't live in New York. For some people it's important to have access to a film when it opens in New York and that's the whole notion behind the coordinated premiere. There are more people outside of New York than in it that are going to read a review in the *New York Times*. I'm a big advocate for people seeing films in the cinema and the idea of the coordinated premiere is to work in tandem with the theaters and do what will help them raise awareness of a film in a way that otherwise wouldn't be possible.

In the future what you will probably see with our coordinated premieres is that the cities where the film is screening will be blacked out and they won't be able to watch it on Fandor. Instead, they'll get a message that says, "Go see this in the theaters. It's playing." We'll do this by zip code. But we don't always have the luxury to do what we want.

Unfortunately, with the closing of the Red Vic on Monday and what will probably be the eventual demise of the Balboa, now that Gary Meyer is no longer involved, there's less opportunity to see things in a cinema than there was even a few years ago; obviously, than there was 20 years ago. I want to capitalize on the initial interest in the film and not expect that the audience is going to somehow magically remember that they wanted to see that movie when it finally shows up in their city. If it ever shows up in their city. Or if they somehow remember it when they go into a video store or they add it to their Netflix queue or whatever (there probably won't be such a thing anymore). I want that initial response when they read a review by Manohla Dargis or whomever to be able to act on it. The current system doesn't allow for that. Far too many films go unseen.

This windowing process--the idea that a movie plays at a festival and opens theatrically and then becomes available on home video and then ends up on television--that whole process is established by the studios to maximize their profits. It makes perfect sense for them. The same is true with territories: the ability to make money over and over again with the same film. Films are expensive so that's the only way you can really do it. The only solution is either to make movies for less or to coordinate a release to break free of this arbitrary windowing. Far too often independent filmmakers have bought into this idea that that's what they have to do because it's the way it's done, even though it ultimately hurts them.

**Guillén: Let's pursue that. What does a streaming site like Fandor offer to a filmmaker? What is the advantage of a filmmaker to license their film to Fandor? In contrast to marketing it on DVD?**

Marlow: I believe--at least at this stage--that Fandor is part of a larger strategy for filmmakers. I would never encourage anyone to make an exclusive deal with Fandor

and not find any other mechanism to recoup the original investment that they made in the film. A lot of filmmakers will say they just want people to see their movie and there are ways of doing that that are free. You can put it on Vimeo or YouTube. But a more sensible strategy is to make the film available in a way that it makes money. That's why, again, I take issue when people talk about something being "free." There should be the subtext: free to you; but, we believe that people should be paid for their work so we're going to pay them. You're going to watch it for free but it's not free.

**Guillén: Which, of course, addresses Fandor's subscription fee to offset these expenses. It strikes me that your fee is quite inexpensive.**

Marlow: It's inexpensive but it's inexpensive in relation to what everybody else is doing.

**Guillén: I ask about the fees in the wake of the recent fracas over recent changes at Netflix. I'm conflicted. Even if the subscription goes up to \$25 for unlimited access to mail rentals and streaming, that still seems incredibly inexpensive for what you can get.**

Marlow: Netflix came out and said that they weren't going to do what they did. They said they would always embrace DVD for as long as DVDs were being released. If you think about it, they supported this idea that they weren't going to have everything streaming. They couldn't afford it. So DVDs act as the stopgap for the titles that they couldn't license. Considering how they frustrated Criterion enough to move all their titles out and focus on Hulu instead, by offering Criterion on DVD they were still able to satisfy the customer who couldn't watch Criterion streaming. By breaking those in two, it's asking people to either make a choice or pay 60% more. When Reed Hastings comes out and says, "I don't believe that people are going to change", I don't know anyone who hasn't changed their account. We moved to streaming only immediately.

**Guillén: Will Fandor offer what MUBI offers by way of streaming films showing at film festivals?**

Marlow: I imagine we will, yes. We don't have anything that we're planning to do at the moment. There's a real problem with that strategy, however. It doesn't really conform with what most people will allow. Whether right or wrong, most festivals are vehicles for undistributed films to find distribution. Most people generally do not want their films to appear online prior to that; but, for shorter works and what have you, there are definitely opportunities. Still, I think this slavish devotion to film festivals is disturbing.

When you asked earlier about Keyframe, what was critical for me when we created Keyframe was to have it be the antithesis of what everyone else was doing. In other words, almost everything MUBI writes about is outward-facing--what's happening

at this film festival or what's screening at this museum or what retrospective is happening--but it's not genuinely actionable. My guidance to Kevin Lee when he joined the company was to find people to write about the library and not necessarily even about specific films--though he's done quite a bit of that--but to deal more broadly with what was really great about Greencine, which were the primers. They were a gateway in for film novices to learn more. If we had more noir--which we will in time--a film like *The Hitchhiker* becomes the perfect gateway into a lot of different films. Cross-published on *The Evening Class*.