

Introducing Fandor: Netflix-Meets-Sundance Online

By Michelle Castillo

March 9, 2011



Despite being told by critics and audiences you made a great film, it can be hard for independent filmmakers to sell their movie to a distributor. Film festivals only produces so many big deals, and a lot of movies are never to be heard from again.

That's where Fandor is hoping to step in. Marketing themselves as Netflix-meets-Sundance, the online video streaming/distribution company offers an Internet-based venue for films that have proven themselves through the film festival circuit and have received favorable reviews. The company combines social media and traditional word-of-mouth to market their films. Joining the board is former Facebook chief privacy officer Chris Kelly, as well as Ted Hope, producer of *American Splendor* and *21 Grams*.

"We've been looking at how do people find out and watch the world of independent film and how do people do that online," chief operating officer Montgomery Kosma says. "So we've built a new movie service, one of the first film services from the ground up on top of Facebook and social networks."

Fandor's concept: Independent movies become hits because of word of mouth, and the easiest way to share that information is online. With special editing tools provided on the site, customers can cut out their favorite scene from a movie they are watching and post it on their Facebook page. Not only can friends comment,

Fandor lets them click on the link to watch the full movie for free as a taste of what their library offers. If people like what they watch, they can sign up for a 30-day free trial, share clips and share that film with their social network.

As for the filmmakers, they get a part of the deal as well. "Our DNA is one part tech, one part Indie and one part social," Kosma proudly says. Fifty percent of all gross revenue goes into a filmmakers' pot. That money is then doled out according to the percentage of Fandor viewers who watched the movie, how much of the movie is watched and how many people shared clips.

Although digital distribution sometimes isn't the end game that some filmmakers hope for, it's a cheaper route than financing your film's run in theaters. The cost to make a print is about \$2500, so barring any additional distribution costs and saying you want to show your movie in 100 theaters, you're looking at a \$250,000 bill. Not only does it not cost the filmmaker if he or she already shot and edited the film to transfer onto a digital format, they can see some return from their project - and best of all, get people to see their movie.

All Fandor films are available for streaming, and they hope to expand to new filmmakers that maybe haven't had the resources to market their films to a larger audience like Sundance. Fandor has even helped one film get a bigger distribution deal that will put it in theaters, although this is a rare occurrence. As of now, you can choose from a wide variety of films like Oscar-nominated foreign film *Dogtooth* to cult documentary *Winnebago Man*. "We're interested in the things that don't get picked up," he explains.

"There's still hundreds of films made every year that have a tremendous amount of creative merit and great storytelling," he continues. "The creators of films in the real world and the audience for films in the mainstream can connect with each other thanks to Fandor."