



## SPOTLIGHT: FANDOR.COM CEO TED HOPE ON CREATING THE “GREATEST ONLINE CINEMA EXPERIENCE” FOR THE INDIE FILM REVOLUTION

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On January 30, 2014, veteran film producer Ted Hope was appointed CEO of [Fandor](#), an online cinema platform that streams movies, video essays on the filmmakers, and encourages community discussion.

Designed for a niche audience, 70 percent of Fandor’s 5,000 film library is made up of international content, and 25 percent runs thirty minutes or less. The company and filmmakers share an even 50/50 split of the revenue. In June, Agnieszka Holland’s latest, *Burning Bush*, made its U.S. streaming debut on Fandor day-and-date with the films’ theatrical debut. In April, Fandor secured exclusive SVOD distribution rights to 16 Werner Herzog films that had never been previously available for streaming.

In addition to his duties at Fandor, Hope just published a book called *Hope for Film: From the Frontlines of the Independent Cinema Revolutions*, a lessons-from-the-trenches book which chronicles his 20 years of experience working with filmmakers like Ang Lee, Nicole Holofcener, Hal Hartley, and many others.

Hope, 52, spoke to SSN about Fandor, and discussed the many changes to the indie film front over the last 20 years.

SSN: It seems like every streaming site eventually moves to original content, be it Netflix, Amazon, or Hulu. Is that something you envision for Fandor?

Hope: It's great that everyone is jumping on that bandwagon—it's wonderful for both creators and fans. But right now we're concentrating on building the greatest online cinema experience for the cinephile.

SSN: Is there template of another medium whose success you'd like to emulate?

Hope: We need something akin to Sundance and Cannes, or what Taschen Books or Criterion has done to help people recognize art or the unique qualities that great cinema has—which creates a shared emotional response among strangers, compels them to reveal who they are, and to discuss it at an incredibly emotional and heightened level.



**SSN: How marked is the difference between theatrical and online viewing?**

**Hope:** When I watch a movie in the cinema, I don't delve deep into the artist's work and history the way I can online; I can't stop the film and do side research; I don't have an immediate way to engage in conversation. Those are unique attributes that currently have not been collected under one roof. We'll be able to do it at Fandor.

**SSN: You produced over 70 movies. Do you miss the days of being a film producer?**

**Hope:** The challenge of earning one's living producing the kind of movies that I love became too hard for me. What I couldn't tolerate anymore was all of the compromise that goes in to making movies—reducing the budget, casting someone you didn't want, changing the story. I believe I can do more to help movies right now from where I sit at Fandor than I could producing.

**SSN: You're producing your wife's documentary feature directorial debut, *All Eyes and Ears*. How aggressive do you plan on being as a producer going forward?**

**Hope:** I very much plan on making another 10 to 12 films, but at a much slower pace. The main

difference is I do not want to produce for my living. I want to produce out of love and belief in the project. That requires a different structure.

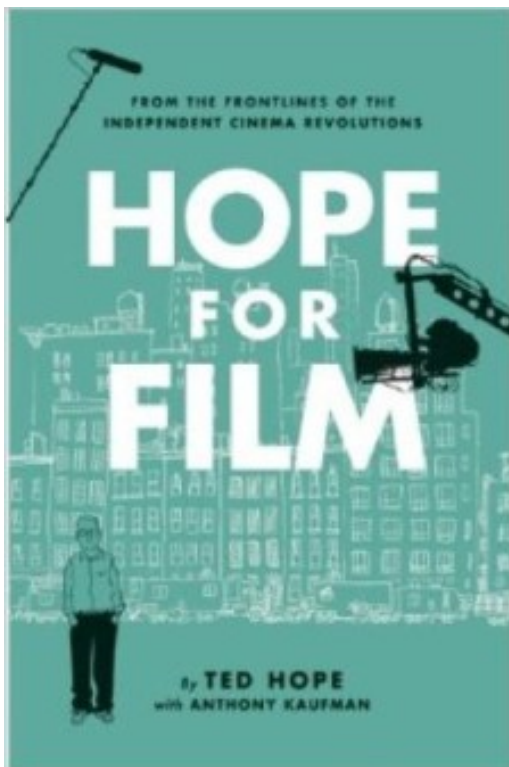
**SSN: How is being a filmmaker different today than it was, say, 10 or 20 years ago?**

**Hope:** We now live in this cultural abundance where distraction is the law of the land. Our ability to access anything, anywhere, any time, on any device, is how it is. It puts filmmakers in a double bind. Logically if there's so much noise and competition, the sound thing to do is try to meet it head-on and be as prolific as possible.

**SSN: But on the other hand ...**

**Hope:** Because there's so much content out there and the barriers to entry have dropped, it requires you to be far more disciplined [in] practicing restraint, recognizing that just because you can say something doesn't mean you should say [it], and to make sure your work stands out in that crowded field.

*"I believe I can do more to help movies right now from where I sit at Fandor than I could producing." – Ted Hope*



**SSN: What is the long-term effect of crowd-funding sites like Kickstarter?**

**Hope:** It's the accountability it delivers between an artist and their community. It's not just fans helping to fund work; it's them having a relationship with the creative class; a fan can become a financier. It's the first step in something that is very close to patronage.

**SSN: If we're moving toward patronage-based filmmaking, how does that affect filmmakers dependent upon this patronage?**

**Hope:** The question becomes, 'is feature film how I earn my living, or more how I express myself?' Because 80 percent of filmmakers never go on to make a second film. The average time between the first and second film is frequently eight years. It's crazy.

**SSN: That is not at all how it works in other industries.**

**Hope:** The average entrepreneur fails four times before they find their first success. They've built a system where that failure is acknowledged, where each one is a learning experience that builds upon it. But [in the film industry] we shame ourselves off the field before we even have gotten started.

**SSN: What have you seen out there this summer that you enjoyed on the big screen?**

**Hope:** It's very disappointing to me that there aren't more films that are designed for adults. That said, I enjoyed the popcorn movies that were made for me, from *Snowpiercer* to *Planet of the Apesto Lucy*. And my God, yes, to see something like *Boyhood* get made and seen!

**SSN: Are you frustrated by the lack of options for adults?**

**Hope:** There's so much more that never comes to our door, that gets pushed out by that kind of winner-takes-all, those that make the most noise in the thunderstorm; it's discouraging.

**SSN: And that is where Fandor comes in to offer an alternative, right?**

**Hope:** There are so many great movies. We are never going to run out of them. Fandor is a conversation starter around cinema. Some folks choose their entertainment to be stuff that allows them to escape or tune out. Fandor is for the person that actually believes in the transformative power of cinema.