

YouTube streamlines its video-viewing page

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"We're excited to unveil the first major example of our efforts to simplify and streamline the video page to offer the best possible watching experience," YouTube engineer Igor Kofman and designer Julian Fromar said in a blog post.

The concept at the heart of the redesign is to "make the video the star," according to Kofman and Fromar.

"To that end, the new look is more subdued, stripped down and simple than before," the pair said. "The design should help ease users into

advanced features, while providing power users with all the functionality they want."

New features include letting YouTube users search for videos while watching one, instead of having to break from viewing to conduct searches.

YouTube users can opt-in for the new viewing page format or stick with the old one.

"As with all things on the Web (and in life?), change is hard and can take some time to get used to," Fromar and Kofman said.

"That's why we did a lot of research, talked with so many of you and incorporated your thoughts into this latest back-to-basics playback page."

YouTube's playback page redesign was unveiled a day after the Google-owned online video-sharing hotspot announced it will begin testing an online movie rental service on Friday to kick off the Sundance Film Festival.

Five independent films from the 2009 and 2010 Sundance festivals will be part of a "small collection of rental videos" to be available to US users of the popular [video-sharing website](#) in "the weeks ahead," according to YouTube.

Sundance films available for rental from Friday through January 31 will include "Bass Ackwards" and "Children of Invention."

YouTube invited independent film makers to sign on to have their works offered for rent at the website.

The video rental move represents another step for [Google](#) in generating

revenue from YouTube, which it bought in 2006 in a deal valued at 1.65 billion dollars.

[YouTube](#) will also be stepping in as a potentially formidable contender in the growing market of online distribution of films that includes videogame consoles, Apple's iTunes shop, and US DVD rental giant Netflix.

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