

Site offers movie ratings with a twist

10 September 2009, By Etan Horowitz

There's no shortage of Internet sites and services that rate movies. RottenTomatoes.com and Metacritic.com compile critics' reviews; while IMDB.com lets users pick the Top 250 movies of all time. If you want to know what your Facebook friends thought of a film, there's the Flixster Movies application for Facebook and the iPhone.

Despite such a crowded landscape, two Florida entrepreneurs think they've come up with a better way to figure out which movies really are the greatest of all time. On Wednesday, Nathan Chase of Winter Garden and Jeremy Thompson of Apopka launched Flickchart.com, a free site that ranks movies by giving users a decidedly simple choice: which film do you like better, movie A, or movie B?

"It forces you to be honest," said Chase, 30. "With the other sites, if you have two five-star movies like 'Titanic' and 'ET,' there is no way to determine which one is better than the other because they both have the same value."

Once you make enough of these choices, the site creates a personalized list of your favorite movies, and it combines everyone's lists to figure the best movies of all time. The service, which opened in private beta in May 2008, has so far only been used by about 25,000 tech-savvy, early adopters. So the list skews toward Sci-Fi and action, with "The Dark Knight" at No. 1 followed by "Star Wars, the Empire Strikes Back" and "Raiders of the Lost Ark."

The two are both graduates of Stetson University who ended up working at the same company. Mutual outrage over the fact that "Pulp Fiction" ranked higher than the "Empire Strikes Back" on the IMDB's list of top films inspired them to come up with a unique way to rank movies. Since September 2007, they've been spending nights and weekends working on the site, and they've only spent about \$1,000 on the project.

I've been using Flickchart for about a month, and

it's definitely addicting and fun. Some of the movie match-ups it creates are downright bizarre, such as "Schindler's List" vs. "Borat," which makes it pretty tough to decide which film you like better.

To help guide you in making these tough picks, the site suggests that you think about which movie you would rather watch right now, or, if you could only watch one movie the rest of your life, which of the two would it be? Each matchup has a discussion board so you can debate the movies with other users.

The most discussed matchup is "Ghost Busters" vs. "Back to the Future." Another neat feature is that the site often displays foreign posters for the films you are ranking.

But there still are a lot of issues to be worked out. The site can be slow and the search function is frustrating. Perhaps the biggest problem is that there are only about 10,000 films in the site's database, and it doesn't include all of the movies currently in theaters. The founders say they plan to address all of these issues.

To be sure, Flickchart is a lot of fun and is a good way to waste a few hours at work. But why should you use it?

The answer may lie in the detailed data created when you rank movies and the site's social-networking functions. Besides seeing which movies you like best, you can filter your list by decade or genre. You can also find out how much of your life you've spent watching movies (for me it's 37 days, 19 hours and 15 minutes). This information can help you decide what movies to watch again, or convince you it's time to leave the couch.

The most useful list displays the highest-ranked movies that you've never seen, which can help you decide what to watch. In the future, Chase and Thompson plan to add more features, like the ability to narrow down the list of movies you've never seen. For instance, you could generate a list

of the highest-rated sports comedies from the 1990s that you've never seen.

You can add other users as friends to view their lists, and in the future, you will be able to generate a list of the highest-rated [movies](#) that you and your friends have not seen -- something that will make a group trip to the video store a lot more peaceful.

Chase and Thompson make money off the site through advertising and commissions they receive if someone purchases a movie by clicking on one of the links on the site. They also hope to sell some of the foreign-movie posters the site displays. If it's successful the duo plan to create similar ranking sites for things such as music or books.

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