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FILM

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For the film fan on your Christmas list, you've got two options. You can get them a book about movies, a vintage poster, an artifact or a cinema-related knickknack (little plastic Oscar, anyone?). Or you can just cut to the chase and buy them movies.

Novice

If your friend considers himself a movie fan, he's probably already got Netflix (face it, who doesn't?), so let's gloss right over that. But there are some frustrating gaps in the netflix.com inventory, especially in the avant garde, foreign and classic genres. If your friend is a stickler for variety, he might prefer a starter subscription to **Facets**. The Chicago-based retailer, with a catalog of 65,000 titles, is more expensive than Netflix, at \$24 a month. But it has something for everyone: indies, docs, Hollywood, Bollywood, Trolleywood, chopsocky, even stuff that's blatantly schlocky. It has many titles Netflix lacks, for rental and purchase, and it still traffics in VHS, which Netflix does not do.

Be sure to sign your friend up for the cool bimonthly newsletter, which gets a person fired up to watch movies, movies, movies. The people at Netflix do their job efficiently, but it's clear that the people at Facets truly love and understand films and filmmaking. Visit facets.org.

Fan

There will always be film aficionados who insist on being the first on their block to do something. They want to be able to say, five years from now, "Remember, I was the one who told you what a good director Tjebbo Penning is!" or "Deepa Mehta always has used color brilliantly!"

A yearlong movie-of-the-month subscription to filmmovement.com, which specializes in emerging directors, will make them happy. (It's \$159.20, which works out to \$13.27 a month, for a DVD you get to keep.) There is virtually no chance your friend or their friends have seen these movies before, unless they're in the habit of hanging out at film festivals. This is because Film Movement is the sole distributor of its films.

But if nobody's seen them, how can you know if they're any good? Ahh, but what is life without adventure?

"When people are overwhelmed by choice, they tend to gravitate toward what they know, what they've seen or heard about," says Stuart Litman, president of Film Movement. "People are not really taking a chance."

Litman and his crew troll film festivals worldwide for undiscovered nuggets, and frequently call film-world heavy hitters to recommend films. One of these, Richard Peña of Lincoln Center, says he prefers films that are different than standard American movie fare.

"I like films with more of an edge, or an insight into a different part of the world," says Peña.

December's choice is "Anytown USA," a documentary about a municipal election directed by Juan Dominguez, which is surprisingly sad. The disc, like all Film Movement titles, includes a short film. For details, visit filmmovement.com.

(For friends who like a dose of progressive activism with their cinema, a new DVD-of-the-month club, **Ironweed Films**, may fit the bill. While it doesn't seem to have Film Movement's insider connections, the club's political intent is front-and-center. Visit ironweedfilms.com.)

Expert

Then there's the hard-core element on your Christmas list, people who want the whole world and want it now. You know them: They go crazy knowing that classics such as "A Day in the Country," "The Devil, Probably" and "Sult" are available on DVD overseas but not in North America. They bemoan the gaps in their Jean-Luc Godard, Fritz Lang and Jean Vigo collections. They crave that awesome Bertrand Blier box set that was just released in France. Or maybe they're just Average Joes who love a foreign TV series that nobody here has ever heard of.

For cinephiles, a **multi-region DVD player** is the only gift to give.

DVD distributors long ago split the world into regions, to control who gets to see what and when. All DVD players sold in North America and all DVDs sold and rented here are exclusively Region 1. It's impossible to watch a disc produced elsewhere in the world on a Region 1 player.

Multi-region players - which can play any disc produced anywhere in the world - can't be bought in brick-and-mortar stores, so don't try. Secondary retailers buy them in bulk, tinker with them to eliminate the code restrictions, then resell them, most prominently on amazon.com, at prices no better or worse than any other DVD player. The Region 1 powers-that-be would prefer you not to own one, but it's perfectly legal.

Along with the player, get your friend some discs that will make his heart skip a beat. A good place to start is [amazon](http://amazon.com), whose international stores can be linked off the bottom of the home page. Then stop by the all-inclusive, link-intensive dvdbeaver.com and mastersofcinema.org. Other good sites are dvd.it, discshop.se and dvdoo.dk. (Stumbling around foreign-language websites can be daunting at first, but their search functions and checkout all work just like [amazon's](http://amazon.com).)

Gary Tooze, whose [dvdbeaver](http://dvdbeaver.com) is an internet hot spot for the multi-region crowd, points out that some foreign discs have no English-language subtitles, so if you need them, double-check before you buy.

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