

Lionsgate's Surprise Social Media Star: 'Dirty Dancing' and Its 9.4M Friends

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By Brent Lang



EXCLUSIVE

"Dirty Dancing" s' Baby may soon be moving out of the corner and into the world of online gaming. The coming-of-age romance hit theaters nearly 25 years ago, but for reasons that even distributor Lionsgate hasn't quite understood, the movie's Facebook page has quietly racked up 9.4 million fans. The page hovered at about 700,000 fans in 2009. But with the death of star Patrick Swayze that year, followed by co-star Jennifer Grey's popular stint on "Dancing With the Stars," the page's popularity has ballooned.

The unexpected audience has Lionsgate's digital team thinking of ways to capitalize on the movie's social-media superstardom -- and how to mobilize fans of other older movies on social networks.

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Among its "Dirty Dancing" plans, Lionsgate wants to use the film's young lovers as the basis for an online game in the vein of "Farmville" or "Mafia Wars," according to one knowledgeable executive. (Lionsgate officials would not confirm.)

The results are still modest, but "Dirty Dancing" could potentially prove to be a model for studios to better monetize their libraries through social networking. The 1987 sleeper hit now boasts a larger [Facebook presence](#) than recent blockbusters "The Dark Knight" (6.7 million), "Iron Man" (4.5 million) and "Toy Story 3" (721,164).

That is a staggering accomplishment for an older film with a deceased leading man and no sequel on the horizon (let's all try to forget "Dirty Dancing: Havana Nights").



Anne Parducci, Lionsgate's executive VP of home entertainment and marketing admitted that "Dirty Dancing" has proven more popular on Facebook than the studio hoped, but stressed that the company carefully nurtured its fan base on the social network.

"It has exceeded our expectations, but it also comes with hard work and dedication on our behalf to build that audience," Parducci told TheWrap.

Indeed, the movie has proven to be a popular library title for the studio, which has re-released it several times on DVD.

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Lionsgate has been so inspired by the outpouring of affection for an older title like "Dirty Dancing," that it's set about dusting off other library titles for the Facebook debut.

Among the movies that it hopes to turn into social media magnates are "Terminator 2" (705,287 "Likes"), "Rambo" (1.8 million "Likes") and "Apocalypse Now" (468, 604 "Likes"), all of which have now received spruced-up pages courtesy of the studio.

Plans are also in the works for Facebook pages for dog-eared horror films including "Cube" and "Leprechaun."

In the short term, Lionsgate has primarily used the "Dirty Dancing" page to drive DVD and Blu-ray sales. But beyond saying that it had moved some products, Parducci said the true impact was impossible to quantify.

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