

Keep Your Eyeballs To Yourself, Chathead

by

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Remember the scene in the movie [Minority Report](#) where fugitive policeman Tom Cruise is walking through a shopping mall? Retina scanned as he enters he's offered — by name — annoying but pretty ads repeatedly as he passes by display projectors.

It's an iconic scene of the future that many people still find a bit creepy despite its quaint technology.



Never mind that today every step of the way we're being monitored as we traverse the Internet so that Google can offer us personalized ads reflective of our behavior. It's really just as "creepy" as Minority Report, but we're used to it by now, partly since Google, unlike many other advertising companies, has figured out how to balance relevance, personalization, and subtlety.

I thought about all this while watching Mark Zuckerberg present Facebook Home. Home is a technological tour de force that blends elegance in user interface design with the power and flexibility of Android in a way that takes advantage of Facebook-based personal and social data.

Admittedly I'm not in the target demographic for Home. I stopped using Facebook some time ago. I see nothing in Home that would make me want to go back. In fact, it looks like Home would probably make Facebook even more annoying as it pushes "relevant" news, personal

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updates, messages, and (eventually) ads to the always-on top level of the smartphone.

Conceptually, Home reminds me of Tom Cruise experiencing those shopping mall ads whenever he looks at his phone.

Oh, I know that the Facebook experience is supposed to be built on “relationships” and “likes” in a way that reflects personal preferences. In the real world of “push,” though, as often as not what gets “pushed” is more dependent on the needs of the “pusher” than the “pushee.” This has been, for me, one of the disappointments of widespread adoption of social media since there are so many people in business who view social media not as a sharing environment but as an efficiently targetable advertising channel.

Oh, I know you are supposed to be able to fine-tune all the all this via Facebook settings. But I have more important things to do than to constantly rejigger confusing Facebook notification and privacy settings. For me my smartphone (currently an iPhone) is an incredibly useful tool that I control. I’m not ready yet to turn it over to someone else’s definitions around relationships and monetization.

That doesn’t mean that I’m opposed to what Home represents. Far from it. I may be anti-Facebook based on past experience, but the idea of offering a different user experience in addition to a well designed generic user interface makes a lot of sense. As a very simple example, I have on my iPhone my apps spread across three screens — top level individual apps frequently used, mid-level apps stored in folders, and (very) infrequently used apps. This arrangement seems to work well for me, but I can see the benefit of being able to easily rearrange the top level apps based on what type of task or operation I am performing. In other words, the “social” aspect as a way to filter messaging and access operations is much less important than what I’m doing.

I’m sure there’s a way to do all this thru Android widgets and custom launchers but I honestly don’t have the patience to continually tinker with my smartphone, which is one of the reasons, I suppose, that I find the iPhone so useful and easy to use.

Final note: for an intelligent discussion of the pros and cons of the Home architecture, listen to Gina Trapani and Ken Purdy’s recent [“In Beta” podcast #44](#). You can almost see their heads nodding at the overall design as they discuss the pros and cons of Home. They understand the possibilities but, like me, they have some questions about whether Facebook Home is really going to be that useful to them.