

times when it came to the attention of a staffer at YouTube headquarters, in San Mateo, California, who showed it to Maryrose Dunton, YouTube's director of product management. She is one of the people in charge of selecting videos to feature on the YouTube home page, which serves as an informal recommendation list. Of the seventy thousand videos added to the site every day, fewer than a dozen receive this special treatment. Dunton, who says she is "totally fascinated by old people and tech," put Peter's video at the top of the featured list. The YouTube audience, bombarded by frenetic, attention-seeking teens, immediately warmed to Peter's reserve. By the following week, geriatric1927, who had begun narrating his life story, from primary school through the Blitz and on into health-department work in Leicestershire, without ever leaving his chair, had more subscribers than any other user in YouTube's history. "First Try" has now been seen nearly two million times.

One hesitates to cite these statistics, because the story of YouTube, since its launch, ten months ago, has been one of exponential growth, at times challenging the company's abilities to cope with the demand on its servers. (Bandwidth costs are thought to exceed a million dollars a month.) Last week, according to Alexa, a Web-traffic monitor, it was the tenth-biggest site on the Internet, drawing more visits than eBay, Amazon, or Wikipedia. By late summer, there were approximately six million videos archived on the site, and daily viewings had crossed the hundred-million mark, a great many of them devoted not to original content, such as Peter's or Stevie Ryan's, but to preëxisting footage in a wide range of genres: weird home movies (an old woman punching another old woman in the face), sports (Zinedine Zidane's infamous head butt), music (Hendrix playing "The Star-Spangled Banner"), and politics (Senator George Allen referring to a rival's campaign worker as *maccaca*; Bill Clinton attacking Fox News on Fox News).

YouTube was founded in February of 2005, in a Silicon Valley garage, by a couple of former PayPal employees, Steve Chen and Chad Hurley. Their background was technological, not visionary. They aimed to provide an easy interface

for storing, sorting, and sharing the kinds of digital videos that, thanks to cell-phone cameras and Webcams, have become more and more prevalent. When, in late August, I visited the YouTube offices, which sit above a pizza parlor on the main commercial strip in downtown San Mateo, several of the sixty or so employees had just finished watching clips of a dance number from the previous night's Emmy Awards show, in which the host, Conan O'Brien, sang, "At this very moment your kids are on YouTube watching a cat on a toilet." Julie Supan, YouTube's senior director of marketing, handed me a copy of a recent *People Hollywood Daily*. Its cover read, "Television's Brave New World: How the YouTube Revolution Is Changing Everything You Knew About the Industry." She was unclear about what, specifically, the YouTube revolution is, however. "We don't have time to stop and think a lot," she said.

Hurley, the company's C.E.O., told me that he wanted to "democratize the entertainment process," but YouTube's business model remains somewhat

Returning alone after long absence
I was engulfed. No novel, no play
had prepared me for this,
the arched November trees
glazed with ice, the night-emptied
sidewalks chipped with mica
in silent offering.

I had left it all behind
and here—it rose! *The City's*
fiery parcels all undone.

It was the season of regret
and the great wave of first
love lost swept over me.
Catching the buildings'
hooded eyes from afar—
my true paramours!—I was
mournful in my travelling kit,
adolescent with longing
for everything laid out
before me, down on my knees
in the frigid air, on the first
night, asking for benevolence,
second chances without end.

—Melanie Rehak

undefined. The found footage that generates the bulk of its traffic is, in many cases, subject to copyright restrictions, leaving YouTube vulnerable to lawsuits. ("The only reason it hasn't been sued yet is because there is nobody with big money to sue," Mark Cuban, the co-founder of HDNet, said recently.) Networks like NBC and Fox have intervened to request that particular clips—"Lazy Sunday," from "Saturday Night Live," or Clinton's Fox appearance—be taken down. (Fox later relented, possibly because of complaints of censorship; NBC has begun uploading promotional spots, if not actual footage.)

YouTube's long-term strength seems to lie in the devoted community of users and bloggers (or "broadcasters," as the company likes to call them), some of whom turn out to have crossover potential. Brooke Brodack, a skinny, gap-toothed, twenty-year-old receptionist from western Massachusetts, became, in effect, the first real YouTube star, when she was hired in June by Carson Daly to develop content for his production com-

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