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Becoming Famous

People use YouTube for many reasons: to listen to music, watch funny videos, or even post their own videos. On YouTube people can post videos of themselves, or others, doing just about anything. From singing to smashing things, you can find a video for it on YouTube. YouTube has given some emerging stars a path to fame, but is YouTube fame big enough to be considered real fame? Many people have reached a level of fame from YouTube, but how difficult is it to reach that level of fame?

YouTube became popular very quickly, and not by accident. The founders created in a particular way, "...a closer look reveals a story of entrepreneurial savvy, revolutionary ideas concerning new media and technology, and dedicated to an identity that resonated with the young, emerging generation of consumers and artists" (Levy). Part of YouTube's success is the fact that viral videos are becoming more popular, as there are more people using electronic devices and the internet for more and more reasons. Since more people have access to these resources, it became easier to post videos. Many people started posting things on YouTube such as simple home videos or animations, which would often quickly become viral videos. As technology grew so did access to better cameras, editing

programs, and more. YouTube has changed a lot since its beginning, and in a way people have shaped YouTube with what they choose to post.

YouTube allows people to get themselves out there. This is what it has always been, a place to share. “YouTube has been an informal audition space for aspiring artists” (“Review: Blue Neighbourhood.”). Posting a video of yourself singing could lead to thousands of views, likes, and possibly even getting noticed by someone big. Yet, it can also go the other way: no one watches your video, or worse, they click the thumbs down button. Many YouTube stars have a following, and they can post a video and get thousands, even millions, of views quickly. However, other people are one hit wonders. One video gets its moment of fame, but that’s it, unless the creator is prepared. “If you’re lucky enough to achieve a moment of virality, it’s essential that you’re already prepared to be a rock star. Or it just won’t happen. You’ll just be one in a million viral videos that comes and goes” (“Can You Still Become 'YouTube Famous?'”). Many YouTube stars, known as YouTubers, make videos weekly to appease their fans. Not only is YouTube fame difficult to achieve, it’s also a lot of work. “Top creators now have financing from the partner program (and other sources), whereas the newbie is still shooting on a Webcam in their living room” (“Can You Still Become 'YouTube Famous?'”). Once you reach the top it seems to be a pretty smooth ride, but getting there is getting increasingly harder since the most popular “YouTubers” have skills and a reputation.

The platform has reached a level of maturity, both technologically and

culturally, that it's just not as simple as it once was. Once upon a time, in the early days of the platform, a charismatic personality could point a Webcam at themselves and launch into a fascinating topic of interest... If you were relatively compelling, you'd get shared and commented on, and you quickly became a part of a small community. The platform powering that community, however, was growing at an exponential rate, so your social following grew alongside that rate of growth. YouTube's growth was (and is) larger than any individual creator ("Can You Still Become 'YouTube Famous'?").

Some argue that it was once very simple to become YouTube famous, all you needed was a way to record yourself. However, with growing popularity and maturity of the site, it is becoming harder.

An example of someone who has reached the top is a violinist named Lindsey Stirling. She is a performer who dances while she plays the violin. "Stirling began posting her videos of herself performing in 2007 after failing to be signed by a major record label... Explains Stirling: 'It's a very loyal fan base that wants you to succeed because they found you. It wasn't some big radio station or record label that shoved art down someone's throat'" (*Forbes*). Despite being turned down by a major record label, Stirling was still able to rise to fame, via YouTube. She created her own fame and fans. Now she is one of the top paid YouTube performers. Another "YouTuber" who rose to fame by posting videos is Troye Sivan.

...Troye Sivan, a 20-year-old Australian with over 3 million people subscribed to his vlog-based channel. After gaining traction online, he released his EPs and... also received social media endorsements from music industry heavyweights... He puts his vulnerability on display with heartbreaking hooks, post-pop synths, and aestheticised emotions ("Review: Blue Neighbourhood.").

Sivan used his fan base built from posting vlog-style videos to get his music out there. His music proceeded to get him noticed by big artists in the music industry. His music is relatable to his audience, which increases his popularity. "Sivan has crafted his brand through his YouTube channel. His openness as a vlogger translates into his music, which is just as relatable... Troye Sivan's rise to musical fame through YouTube sets him apart from the others; his ability to relate cannot be matched" ("Review: Blue Neighbourhood"). In Sivan's case, the openness and vulnerability in his videos helped his rise to fame. Being relatable to your viewers is important because it gives them a reason to watch or listen.

There are also people who make YouTube videos without showing their faces. You don't know who they are, but they still get thousands or millions of views. People watch their videos on a regular basis. Are these people famous? Their work is talked about, but no one knows who the creator is besides what their YouTube channel name is. For example, there is a channel called "HowToBasic," which begins by showing you how to bake or fix things (such as a computer). However, the fixing becomes bizarre and weird items like eggs and

paint get thrown at the computer until it trashed. “The mysterious Australian creator, who never shows his face or speaks in his videos, has made a killing on YouTube through his absurd, messy, and egg-filled cooking ‘lessons’... he is now over one million subscribers...” (Gutelle). These videos gets lots of views, but you never see a person's face. Should the creator of these videos be considered famous in terms of YouTube fame?

Determining YouTube fame may seem easy: who has the most views, who has a fanbase, or who sells out concerts or tours? However, there are many types of YouTube videos, not just singing or vlogging. People record their screen of themselves playing video games and many other assorted strange things. Some people have achieved clear fame via YouTube, but how do we determine fame for the people we do not see or know who they are behind the screen? Fame is defined as, “...widespread reputation, especially of a favorable character; renown; public eminence...” (“Fame”). So do YouTube stars qualify? People may not be talking about them, but they are talking about something they have created. This is similar to when an author writes a book using a pen name because the work may be talked about but the actual author is unknown. Most people consider the work in the same way as they would if they knew the author. Sometimes with artwork the creator is unknown, or they don't want to be known. If their work is good, their work is still considered in the same way as art by a known artist. So why would it be any different for an unknown creator of a

video? It is still a recognized piece, just with an unknown artists or someone using a pen name of sorts.

YouTube fame, to an extent can be considered real fame. But is this fame all good? YouTube stars are not always as well known as big stars, or their fame is short lived:

...one of the biggest downsides of being a YouTuber is... you're typically not viewed the same as mainstream talent. Since most YouTubers fall into the category between "unknown artist" and celebrity, you have the benefits of earning money doing what you love, but you don't hold the same brand equity as a traditional celebrity. (Luo)

Just as with any kind of fame, there are downsides. In this case, one of those downsides is not being big enough to be considered a celebrity or conventionally famous. A YouTube star could be famous but not quite a celebrity. Is this not reaching real fame? Regardless of whether they are a worldwide phenomenon or not, they can still be famous, as the definition of fame is somewhat broad. These people are talked about and get many views or likes.

Another difficulty of becoming a YouTube star is the amount of skills it requires. Not only does the emerging star need to have a talent, they also need a way to record themselves, a way of editing that video, and they need the technological skills and a computer to upload the video. An emerging singer, for example, may not have the necessary video editing skills to produce a high quality video. They might have an extraordinary voice, but their inability to

produce a video might be what prevents their rise to fame on YouTube. However, some people see this as a good thing about being a “YouTuber” since the creator gets a lot of creative freedom, “...talents are able to produce content with creative freedom and receive income for it...” (Luo, “Pros & Cons of Being a Youtuber Versus a Traditional Talent.”). Traditional stars are often bound to one thing; movie stars act in movies or shows, singers sing and perform, and that is what they do. YouTube stars have the creative freedom to produce what they want, when they want. While there are challenges many people have found ways to combat them in creative and innovative ways, and they have reached fame. On the other hand, it has only held some people back, but we don’t see those people as they never reach fame.

Some people say that YouTube fame is not real fame, since it is merely a place to share videos. However, regardless of whether we see a person or not, these people get many views on videos they post, sell out concerts, have large fan bases, and more. Being a “YouTuber” causes people to be recognized and talked about. According to the dictionary definition of fame, YouTube fame is real fame. Reaching that level of fame... now that’s the hard part.

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