

# YouTube at age five a growing player in online films

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The internet homepage of the YouTube website. YouTube turned five on Friday. In the scant time since the first video was uploaded to YouTube on April 23, 2005, the website has rocketed to global stardom and become a key player in a shift to Internet television.

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"Hundreds of millions of people around the world now use the Web to connect and interact with content online," YouTube product manager Shenaz Zack said in a blog post on the eve of the website's birthday.

"A huge percentage of them go even further: they express themselves via parodies, celebrate their favorite videos with mashups, and use music in

educational presentations."

Google is planning a series of celebratory events for closer to the fifth anniversary of the public launch of YouTube in October 2005.

Google bought YouTube in a 1.65-billion-dollar deal about 19 months after the online video-sharing service was founded in February of 2005.

The Internet giant has been carefully transforming YouTube into a money-making stage for enjoying works ranging from backyard videos to independent films.

"YouTube has the potential to be a very instrumental part of Google's future TV plan," said Gartner technology analyst Allen Weiner.

"In the meantime they will tweak features to be more user friendly and will carefully follow what happens to Internet in living room."

YouTube says more than a billion videos are seen daily on its website, which serves up money-making ads to viewers.

An average of 24 hours of video are uploaded to YouTube each minute in an amount of content equal to 150,000 full length films over the course of a week.

The website boasts content deals with more than 10,000 partners including entertainment titan Disney, and on Friday expanded a fledgling online movie rental service.

San Bruno, California-based YouTube was the brainchild of then PayPal co-workers Steve Chen and Jawed Karim.

"YouTube was started to solve a very specific problem," said Weiner.

"Early bloggers had a difficult time putting video in their blogs. I was one of them."

Bloggers flocked to YouTube, which let them seamlessly embed video commentaries in their websites, according to the analyst.

"Then it became a video community without a lot of business model to it," Weiner said. "They weren't charging anybody anything and it was hard to see how they were going to make money."

YouTube became a natural spot for users to upload controversial content, such as pornography or pirated snippets of television shows or films.

It also became a springboard for unknowns to become international stars with home made videos showcasing wit, talent or just the incredibly odd.

Among videos that became sensations was one of explosive results caused by mixing Mentos mints with Coca Cola.

YouTube stars include ukelele maestro Jake Shimabukuro who went on to tour internationally and even performed for the Queen of England at a charity concert in December.

YouTube was quickly targeted by the owners of rights to films and television shows angry about copyrighted material being posted to the website.

"They have made a lot of progress at weeding out illegal content," Weiner said. "They are serious about it. Their future depends on it."

YouTube is out to win the trust of content makers as it modifies its service to stream professional films and capitalize on a trend toward

[Internet television.](#)

"In the last year YouTube has really evolved," Weiner said. "The big question is where YouTube plays in the TV 2.0 space of Hulu and Boxee."

YouTube has the potential to be an instrumental part of a Google "media cloud" where people can access films, books, magazines, television shows and other digitized content.

"That is clearly part of Google's grand vision," Weiner said.

YouTube has added live content to its attractions and said this week that fans of Indian Premier League cricket in the United States will be able to watch the semi-finals and final of the season live on YouTube.

Many new models of Internet-enabled televisions feature built-in links to [YouTube](#).

"You will have Apple, [Google](#) and Amazon competing in the space to buy movies from them and watch them on whatever screen you desire -- personal computer, laptop, iPad, smartphone, TV," Weiner said.

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