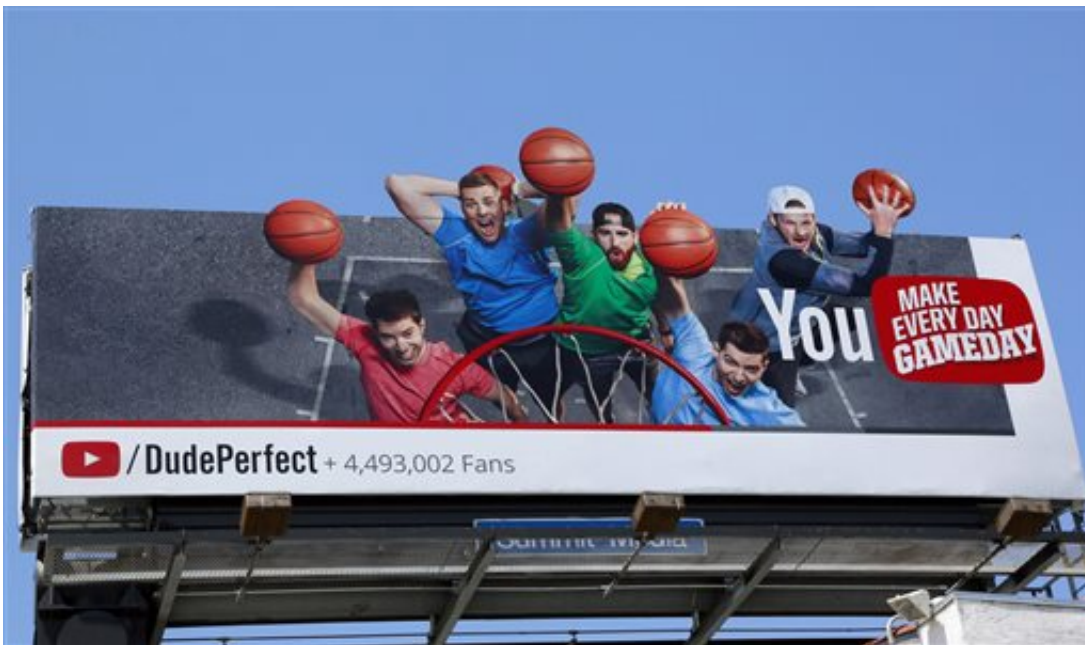


After a decade online, YouTube is redefining celebrity

May 24 2015, byDerrick J. Lang



This Thursday, May 21, 2015 photo shows a DudePerfect YouTube marketing billboard in Culver City, Calif. Google has opened production facilities in London, Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo and Sao Paulo for creators who have more than 5,000 subscribers to film videos. The studios are equipped with sets and equipment that transcend most YouTubers' living rooms and webcams and the spaces serve as social hubs for creators. Several of them will host 10th anniversary parties on May 27. (AP Photo/Nick Ut)

It's a meet-and-greet worthy of an A-list star.

Outside the three-story bookstore at the outdoor shopping mecca known as The Grove, hundreds of mostly [young women](#) have formed a line that stretches past trendy clothing stores and spills out onto a nearby street. They're waiting to have Connor Franta, an affable 22-year-old Internet personality best known for delivering diary-like monologues on YouTube, sign a copy of his new memoir.

The irony of a YouTube star drawing a massive crowd at a bookstore isn't lost on talent manager Andrew Graham.

"A year ago, I went to New York and tried to get a book publisher to take a meeting with me," said Graham, who represents Franta and other mega-popular YouTubers. "I had one meeting, and they laughed at me. Here we are a year later at Barnes & Noble in Los Angeles with a New York Times best-selling author who is a client. I think that says it all. It's a 180-degree turn."

Franta isn't a singer, chef, comedian or athlete. He's a YouTube star angling to be the Oprah Winfrey for millennials.

In its 10-years of existence, YouTube has evolved from a playground for kitty videos to a \$20 billion visual menagerie. Along the way, it's also become an incubator for a new type of celebrity—a digital Brat Pack that's leveraging smartphone stardom to write books, drop albums, design products and break into Hollywood.

"It's the most powerful marketing platform in the world for millennials," said Graham. "If you're trying to reach that audience of girls gathered downstairs, YouTube is the venue to do that. Look at an artist like Fred (Lucas Cruikshank). He went off to Hollywood, created some films, neglected his channel, came back to YouTube and ... crickets. No one was there anymore. You can't abandon it."

In recent years, YouTube, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary this month, has propped up YouTubers like Franta—"creators," the site calls them—who attract millions of subscribers that regularly watch their online videos and the advertising attached to them.



This undated photo provided by Vessel shows, Senior Talent Manager, Big Frame, Andrew Graham, left, and YouTube creator, Connor Franta. The irony of a YouTube star drawing a crowd at a bookstore isn't lost on Graham. "A year ago, I went to New York and tried to get a book publisher to take a meeting with me," said Graham, who represents Franta and other mega-popular YouTubers. "I had one meeting, and they laughed at me. Here we are a year later at Barnes & Noble in Los Angeles with a New York Times best-selling author who is a client. I think that says it all." (Jeremy Castillo/Vessel via AP)

Their popularity is still eclipsed by music videos, which continue to account for YouTube's most watched clips. Yet the fandom that creators

are inspiring, and the ad revenue they're bringing in, can't be ignored.

With his playful grin and doe eyes, Franta currently boasts more than 4.4 million devotees to his personal YouTube channel, where he speaks to viewers about life, dating, candy, whatever at least once a week. He began posting videos in 2010 while still attending high school in La Crescent, Minnesota. Now, he's releasing music compilations and a line of locally grown coffee.

For every Justin Bieber or Psy, perhaps YouTube's biggest success stories, there are dozens of Frantas. It's a form of celebrity that didn't exist 10 years ago, when YouTube was born and made it simple to post video online. Franta, who continues to upload videos despite his other endeavors, is young enough to have been inspired by the YouTube vloggers that came before him.

"There are guys like Shane Dawson and Phillip DeFranco who I was a fan of, and now we're friends," said Franta, sequestered from fans behind racks of his book, "A Work in Progress," in the Barnes & Noble stockroom. "Do you know how awkward it would be to tell some of my friends that I watched them on YouTube in my bedroom before I knew them? It's weird to think of it like that."

The creators' importance to YouTube is evidenced by the Google-backed site bankrolling marketing campaigns the past two years featuring such famous (on the Internet) faces as Bethany Mota, Hannah Hart and Grace Helbig. While such creators vlog about very different topics, they usually share a similar aesthetic: improvised delivery, quirky editing and personalities that jump off screens.

Google has opened production facilities in London, Los Angeles, New York, Tokyo and Sao Paulo for creators who have more than 5,000 subscribers to film videos. The studios are equipped with sets and

equipment that transcend most YouTubers' living rooms and webcams. The spaces also serve as social hubs for creators. Several of them will host 10th anniversary parties on Wednesday.



In this April 24, 2015 file photo, Hannah Hart attends Variety's Power of Women Luncheon at Cipriani Midtown in New York. The creators' importance to YouTube is evidenced by the Google-backed site bankrolling marketing campaigns the past two years featuring such famous (on the Internet) faces as Bethany Mota, Hart and Grace Helbig. While such creators vlog about very different topics, they usually share a similar aesthetic: improvised delivery, quirky editing and personalities that jump off screens. (Photo by Andy

Kropa/Invision/AP, File)

"For us, creators are the lightbulb of the ecosystem," said Kevin Allocca, YouTube's head of culture and trends. "Sure, YouTube was originally known for viral videos, and that was great and still is, but if you want to be able to build a business, you need to be able to create a following. I think it's a very different model than traditional media. It's about maximizing the connection with an audience."

That's not so different from the genesis of YouTube, which entered its beta phase in May 2005. The first-ever video posted on the site was a crude 19-second clip titled "Me at the Zoo" that featured YouTube co-founder Jawed Karim speaking directly to the camera about the "cool" elephants at the San Diego Zoo.

It's been a decade, and while video lengths are longer and resolutions are higher, the sentiment is the same: watch me.



In this April 24, 2015 file photo, Hannah Hart attends Variety's Power of Women Luncheon at Cipriani Midtown in New York. The creators' importance to YouTube is evidenced by the Google-backed site bankrolling marketing campaigns the past two years featuring such famous (on the Internet) faces as Bethany Mota, Hart and Grace Helbig. While such creators vlog about very different topics, they usually share a similar aesthetic: improvised delivery, quirky editing and personalities that jump off screens. (Photo by Andy Kropa/Invision/AP, File)

The next evolution for online video has seemingly already arrived, with

such sites and apps as Twitch, Periscope, Meerkat and YouNow making it easier than ever to stream live video. That's a feature YouTube has in its arsenal but the streaming video giant has yet to solidify itself as a live video destination.

"There's a ton of opportunity for innovation there," said Allocca. "As it becomes easier to stream and take advantages of audiences built on YouTube, there's going to be some interesting stuff. It's another one of those things that's really hard to predict what will be next. I definitely think live experiences and people gathering around singular moments will continue to grow."

If the rise of YouTube over the past decade is any indication, so will the lines to meet creators.



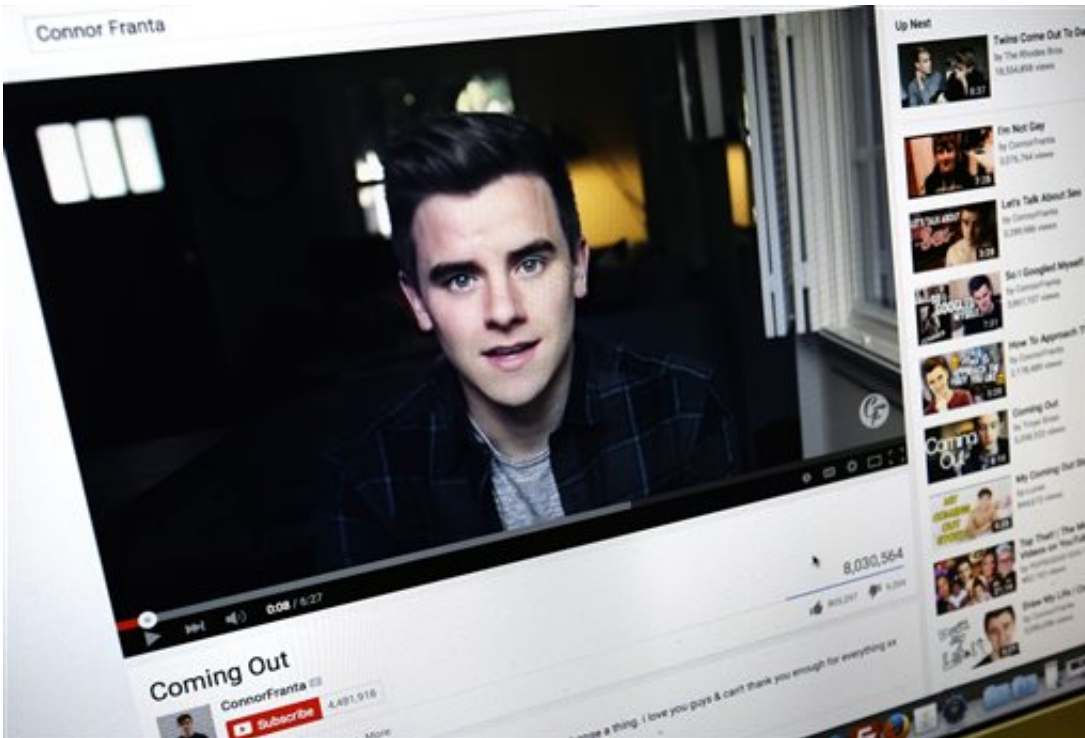
In this Feb. 19, 2015 file photo, Bethany Mota arrives at unite4:good and Variety's 2nd annual unite4:humanity at the Beverly Hilton Hotel in Beverly Hills, Calif. The creators' importance to YouTube is evidenced by the Google-backed site bankrolling marketing campaigns the past two years featuring such famous (on the Internet) faces as Mota, Hannah Hart and Grace Helbig. While such creators vlog about very different topics, they usually share a similar aesthetic: improvised delivery, quirky editing and personalities that jump off screens. (Photo by Andy Kropa/Invision/AP, File) (Photo by Jordan Strauss/Invision/AP, File)



In this May 9, 2015 file photo, Justin Bieber performs at Wango Tango 2015 at StubHub Center in Carson, Calif. For every Bieber or Psy, perhaps YouTube's biggest success stories, there are dozens of Connor Frantas. It's a form of celebrity that didn't exist 10 years ago when YouTube was born and made it simple to access video online. Franta, who continues to post videos on YouTube despite his other endeavors, is young enough to have been inspired by the YouTube vloggers who came before him. (Photo by Rich Fury/Invision/AP, File)



In this April 2, 2015 file photo, Grace Helbig arrives at the NBC Universal Summer Press Day at The Langham Huntington Hotel in Pasadena, Calif. The creators' importance to YouTube is evidenced by the Google-backed site bankrolling marketing campaigns the past two years featuring such famous (on the Internet) faces as Bethany Mota, Hannah Hart and Helbig. While such creators vlog about very different topics, they usually share a similar aesthetic: improvised delivery, quirky editing and personalities that jump off screens. (Photo by Chris Pizzello/Invision/AP, File)



This Wednesday, May 20, 2015 photo shows, Connor Franta's "Coming Out" video playing on YouTube displayed on a computer screen in Los Angeles. YouTube, which is celebrating its 10th anniversary throughout May, has in recent years propped up YouTubers like Franta - "creators," the site calls them - who attract millions of subscribers that regularly watch their online videos and the advertising attached to them. Their popularity is still eclipsed by music videos, which continue to account for the site's most watched clips. (AP Photo/Richard Vogel)

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