



Inland Clickaholic Wired to YouTube

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By MICHAEL FISHER
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Guitarist Ernie Rogers chases his six-string dreams with a partially dismantled computer and an Internet connection in a battered corner of Colton.

The part-time piñata maker strums for hours in his family's sparse, darkened living room, digitally recording guitar solos and self-written tunes that he posts on YouTube, a wildly popular Web site through which millions of people worldwide watch and share videos via the Internet for free.

"I'm on it 24/7," the lanky 23-year-old says of YouTube. "I'm taking it over."

He may not be far off.

Statistics maintained by YouTube credit Rogers with watching nearly 835,000 recordings on the video-sharing Web site, ranking him as its second-most prolific video watcher behind a Boston man, according to a recent analysis by Johan Pouwelse, a computer science professor at Delft University of Technology in the Netherlands.

With that number in mind, if Rogers watched each video for just 10 seconds, he would have spent more than 14 weeks solid parked at his computer since he joined YouTube in April.

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[Video: Ernie Rogers of Colton has a self-described 24/7 obsession: music and U-Tube](#)

YouTube

A free Web site through which people can watch, share and comment on original or commercial videos worldwide via the Internet.

More than 100 million videos watched daily.

More than 65,000 new videos added each day.

More than 34 million unique users monthly, most between 18 and 49 years old.

Source: www.YouTube.com, Nielsen//NetRatings

YouTube officials declined repeated interview requests.

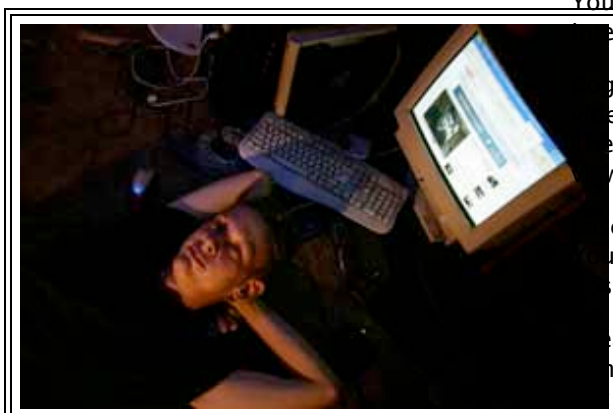
Rogers, who logs in as lamo1234, attributes about one-third of his video-views to watching his own videos, if even for just a few seconds. The self-proclaimed "YouTube rock star" said much of his YouTube viewing involves watching videos posted by others.

Based on YouTube's tallies, Rogers estimates that tens of thousands of YouTube users have watched his videos, from his version of Guns & Roses' "Patience" to his original song, "Waste of Time."

Speaking in staccato sentences, Rogers quietly claims to have figured out a method to manipulate YouTube's viewer counters to boost his numbers. He declined to say how.

Rogers hopes his YouTube adventure will help him form a successful rock band while also exposing millions to his songs.

"I had to figure out a different way to get my music out there," Rogers said. "The way I have it now, it's like crazy. ... I'm worldwide right now."



Stan Lim / The Press-Enterprise
Ernie Rogers, 23, hopes his video posts on YouTube and recognition as a prolific video watcher helps him form a band.

'The Next Madonna'

Would-be rock stars are increasingly turning to YouTube and similar Web sites to create buzz outside the conventional recording industry,



said Jerry Del Colliano, a USC clinical professor of the music industry.

"The next Madonna, the next Britney Spears or the next Ashlee Simpson is out there. ... You can get tremendous traction from YouTube," Del Colliano said.

Launched in December, YouTube's popularity has skyrocketed, bolstered by an online community of artists, musicians and amateur filmmakers hungry to share, view and critique original videos. YouTube had more than 34 million individual users in August, according to Nielsen/NetRatings.

YouTube grabbed headlines this month when a series of video diaries posted by Lonelygir15 were revealed to have been orchestrated by filmmakers with a 19-year-old New Zealand actress playing the starring role.

Rogers, who lives with his mother and brother, gets to work by 4 a.m. most weekdays. He returns home by midday and immerses himself in music and YouTube.

"I hardly go outside," the towering, pale young man said, describing how he spends his afternoons writing songs, practicing guitar while he listens to different musicians.

He attends a local Pentecostal church with his family three days a week, where he sometimes plays volleyball or guitar with the pastor's son after services.

Rogers said his uncle gave him his first acoustic guitar in 1997, and an electric guitar a year later. He taught himself to play, practicing five to eight hours a day. A high school dropout, Rogers taught himself to read and write music, and says he can play the piano, bass, cello and drums.

Critics and Fans

In most of his videos, Rogers stands or sits at home below a dim light, playing guitar as the camera feeds the images into his computer, a mass of spare hard drives and electronic boards sitting on the carpet.

"That's the box, that's the laboratory," Rogers beams.

Dozens of YouTube users have posted comments after watching Rogers' videos. Some praise his guitar and singing skills, others are critical. Critics and fans alike often sprinkle their postings with obscenities.

Online, Rogers describes his music as a cross between Tom Petty, Guns & Roses, Nirvana, and Smashing Pumpkins, just "done 10X worse."

"I love it, I can't stop playing," said Rogers, who has posted 17 videos since joining YouTube.

"You've just got to dream until your dreams come true, I guess," he added.

Del Colliano said YouTube has captivated the notoriously fickle cyberworld community, rivaling MySpace and Facebook for a youthful market of fans who are increasingly attracted to online social networks where they can mingle.

"It's really their way of being hooked on video, as previous generations were hooked on MTV, or as baby boomers might have been hooked on Westerns," Del Colliano said.

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Stan Lim / The Press-Enterprise

Ernie Rogers, who describes his music as a cross between Tom Petty, Guns & Roses, Nirvana, and Smashing Pumpkins, jams on his guitar in his family's Colton home. Rogers spends his afternoons writing songs and practicing his guitar while listening to music on YouTube.

Online at: http://www.pe.com/localnews/inland/stories/PE_News_Local_D_youtube21.3930c2e.html