A Love Letter to YouTube

My darling YouTube,

Your bright red figure was there for me at every step. When I longed for the haunting melancholy of obscure Gregorian chants after watching a documentary about the middle-ages, you were there. When I needed a cheap way to access new music, you provided. You were ready to offer me with all kinds of help for calculus, when my TAs were at their wits end, you reached me and carried me through those terrible wretched exams.

Times got hard, but you evolved. You found a way to reach me on my smartphone, so that you could comfort me wherever I was. Even in the bathroom of a stinky doctor’s office, or a long bus ride home after a stressful day at work. You showed me how to fix the brakes on my car, change my oil, negotiate salary, and how to invest. When I get nostalgic and need to revisit the sights and sounds of my youth, you make it all so sweet, sharp, and clear, and I’m suddenly back in time. Your very physical form is so inviting, always ready for action, always begging for me to relax and press play.

Don’t get me wrong, you can be quite toxic, YouTube. You never help me regulate, and you’ve kept me up late for too many nights to count. You love to keep me sedentary and make it so hard to put my phone down. You feed my need for quick and easy dopamine trips, and sometimes you just flat out lie to me. The unrealistic standards for wealth, beauty, and happiness you assure me are true are in fact artificial and rooted in materialism and misplaced values. It’s as if you’ve declared war on my mind, and refuse to relent, no matter how bloody the battle.

Despite all of this, I’m still right by your side. I accept you despite your glaring faults, and your formless whispers that seek to rewrite my brain chemistry. But you will never leave me out in the cold. It’s a codependent love sure to end in disaster, but I’m here for the ride to the bitter end.

Reflection:

1. I chose YouTube because of its reach. Basically, any subject from the silly to the academic to the macabre has YouTube content associated with it, and some of these content creators are even quite credentialed. Furthermore, YouTube is 20 years old, and has survived reorgs, layoffs, controversy, outlived numerous competitors, several different presidents. It’s stood the test of time, and I’ve been a user of it for a large portion of it.
2. Regarding emotions, I mostly felt happy and silly writing the love letter. Trying to come up with mildly seductive language about a website/mobile app is hilarious. I also felt happy. I’ve enjoyed a lot of my time on YouTube, and look back fondly on things like Epic Mealtime, Autotune The News, Filthy Frank, etc.
3. YouTube is used by the young and the old now. Presidential debates are streamed on YouTube, even small-town news stations have channels. It’s seen across the spectrum of life as a great way to disseminate information, entertain, and critique.
4. Writing the letter validated a lot of the feelings I had toward technology. It’s a large part of life and probably will be for the foreseeable future pending some cataclysmic event. Even then, there would be a huge effort by many people to refurbish old tech. I remember a world before YouTube, but I don’t necessarily want it back, for the most part.