TIME MAGAZINE'S PERSON OF THE YEAR: YOU AND WEB 2.0
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Despite being considered so ten minutes ago in some corners of the the Internet, Time Magazine has selected Web 2.0 -- in particular those people that are directly shaping it -- as its esteemed Person of the Year. Specifically, Time Magazine has singled out *you* for recognition in this achievement and as the actual source of the exciting things happening on the Internet and in society today. Yes, that's *you*, reading this right now. At least if you've been contributing to the Web in some way using the increasingly ubiquitious tools and technologies ranging from the basic blog or wiki all the way up to video sharing platforms and social bookmarking sites.

But the truth of the matter is that just about any interaction with the Web at all generates new content of use to someone else (the so-called Database of Intentions) and so that means frankly, if you're currently using the Web today even just to surf, you've become an integral part of this. "This" being a new generation of openness, sharing, and community powered by the Web that some think may be recognized in hindsight as breaking down important cultural barriers and institutions in a very similar fashion as what happened in the 1960's. True, it often doesn't seem like a revolution to us that see it growing bit and bit every day, but taken as a whole, there's now little doubt that the Web has become the most powerful, egalatarian, and knowledge rich platform in human history. Rapid evolution appears to have accelerated into a sort of revolution.

The Person of the Year cover story appears with the tagline that "*in 2006, the World Wide Web became a tool for bringing together the small contributions of millions of people and making them matter*. The cover story's lead author Lev Grossman then starts off with some fairly inspired prose after noting that there are still serious problems in the word which aregrowing in conjunction with this apparent technological Utopia, writing:

But look at 2006 through a different lens and you'll see another story, one that isn't about conflict or great men. It's a story about community and collaboration on a scale never seen before. It's about the cosmic compendium of knowledge Wikipedia and the million-channel people's network YouTube and the online metropolis MySpace. It's about the many wresting power from the few and helping one another for nothing and how that will not only change the world, but also change the way the world changes.

The cynical among us will find some of Lev's analysis to be starry-eyed and excessively optimistic, but calling out Web 2.0 by name, the Person of the Year cover story makes careful note that the mass participation we're witnessing on a grand scale on the Internet cuts both ways:

Sure, it's a mistake to romanticize all this any more than is strictly necessary. Web 2.0 harnesses the stupidity of crowds as well as its wisdom. Some of the comments on YouTube make you weep for the future of humanity just for the spelling alone, never mind the obscenity and the naked hatred.

But the lead story is just the beginning and Time has prepared an extravaganza of supporting material and documention in the form of fourteen separate stories that range across the Web 2.0 terrain covering subjects from online virtual worlds such as Second Life to an article titled in near purple prose fashion: "The Beast With a Billion Eyes - On the Web, anyone with a digital camera has the power to change history."

None of this however is likely to please most of us who have lived through the year of Web 2.0, as 2006 undoubtedly was its big break with the term making the covers of major media properties like Newsweek and The Economist . In terms of the blogosphere, the self-appointed contributors that are making some of this this happen, the commentary on Time's choice covered the spectrum: Jeff Jarvis agreed with most of what they wrote, just requested that they turn down the volume a

bit. Nick Carr *took it surprisingly easy* on the article, though he's long since posted his opinions of the Web 2.0 phenomenon. Paul Kedrosky came in as one of harshest critics of the story series and accused it of being a blatent cop-out, what with more important issues existing elsewhere in the world needing to be highlighted. With this altter bit I would suggest that the printing press didn't get much credit at the time but it's impact was practically profound and beneficial when looking back several hundred years.

In reality, the Web as it exists today with sites like MySpace and YouTube which eagerly offer anyone who wants it an essentially permanent, scalable "channel" of their very own on the Internet, makes it possible for anyone with great -- or at least interesting -- ideas to reach the over 1 billion users that presently comprise the Web. Never before in history has access to the largest audience of users in the world been essentially free other than the personal time it takes to contribute. The long-term of effects of this will no doubt be as unpredictable as they will be significant as the control over information and content becomes relentlessly decentralized. The Web is essentially a *system without an owner*, a platform that is under no one's control, though anyone is free to built a new platform on top of that. Companies have had varying success in doing just that but the design patterns and business models for making the Web work best are at least beginning to be understood (aka Web 2.0). But in the end, control is shifting to the edge of the Internet instead of the center and it's not likely to shift direction without extremely potent motivation.