Myspace’s Renaissance And Dark Age

Before Facebook took over the Internet by storm, stealing netizen’s social lives, there was one social networking site that permeated the early years of the era of social media: MySpace.

Somehow, it still exists today despite the three giants of social media (Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram) dominating the competition almost entirely, leaving MySpace in the dust. Perhaps users from its early years are still coming back to the website every now and then, revisiting the music files they’ve uploaded. Unfortunately, that cannot happen anymore for some MySpace users as 53 million have reportedly disappeared from the site.

The Fall of a Social Media Goliath

The deteriorating state of the once-dominant social media platform has just turned extreme. Files uploaded on MySpace before 2016 may be gone for good, the company stated recently on its website. The accidental deletion of the said files happened after the website had undergone a server migration project, but the cause of the sudden disappearance of the files has not been disclosed as of yet.

“As a result of a server migration project, any photos, videos, and audio files you uploaded more than three years ago may no longer be available on or from Myspace,” the company stated in the online advisory released Monday. “We apologize for the inconvenience.”

An estimated 53 million songs were said to be removed from the site’s database, all coming from approximately 14 million artists. However, it is still rather unclear how much of those music files were uploaded by users since MySpace announced in 2013 that it contained over 52 million songs that were from record labels as well as its users.

Publications have since presumed that the data loss may be due to MySpace’s poor archiving practices since the social networking firm refused to accommodate questions regarding the incident, thus, not providing further details about what happened.

However, according to Damon Krukowsi of Pitchfork, the huge data loss at MySpace actually happened months ago, and that only a few have taken notice of the incident until MySpace itself revealed to everyone that it encountered a loss of data, suggesting that people and publications have already lost interest to the social networking site to the extent of overlooking an incident that would rather be a headliner if it happened on a more popular platform like Facebook.

“[The] larger disregard of Myspace suggests a collective loss of interest in the type of history we associate with archives—a reconstruction of a specific moment in the past,” Krukowski wrote.

One of the artists trying to recover the lost music on MySpace is Jordan Tallent who contacted the site’s company after the songs of his former band Where Got Ghost mysteriously disappeared. In an email, MySpace responded to Tallent, where he was told about the data loss on the site’s archive. However, the email said that only those that have been uploaded on the site before 2013 were lost.

“If you had a Myspace profile before 2013 certain content that was related to classic Myspace accounts (messages, comments, blogs, videos, etc.) are no longer available for retrieval or download as they were not migrated to our redesigned website that launched in 2013,” the company stated.

MySpace’s Renaissance and Dark Age

MySpace had first found its foothold on the internet in the year 2003. It was established by a group of employees at eUniverse, an Internet marketing company, including Brad Greenspan, Josh Berman, Tom Anderson, and Chris DeWolfe.

As the site gradually emerged to something as formidable as it is with Facebook today, MySpace, along with its contemporaries, was set to fulfill the promise set out by the first pioneers of social networking sites like Six Degrees, the first site to be considered as social media, according to Small Bitz Trend. During its peak, MySpace claimed to have over 250 million users of the site in the United States alone, and by 2005, when the site’s parent company has been bought out for more than half a billion dollars, MySpace was already considered as the most-visited site, surpassing Google.

But that success was not long-lived as its competitors managed to outgrow their success all throughout, leaving nothing but its mark in the history of social media as one of its first champions—but even a huge part of that legacy has been erased.

Additional References:

- https://loudwire.com/bands-who-got-start-on-myspace/
- https://smallbiztrends.com/2013/05/the-complete-history-of-social-media-infographic.html

Krukowski, among other people, has speculated a time in the current era of information superhighway where history would be erased due to loss of information, leaving a void in people’s own pasts that would never be revisited; this is referred to as the ‘digital dark age’. Considering what happened to MySpace recently, Krukowski contemplated that maybe, we are living at that age right now.

“It’s not hard to imagine, because living and working with digital media is to continually lose access even to one’s own past,” Krukowski wrote. “We may indeed be living in a digital dark age. But what I can’t picture is why this digital dark age will ever end, what would cause a future renaissance to cast it in retrospective shadow. Might it be that the digital era is not only difficult to archive, but anti-historical? That’s what the Myspace incident suggests to me, above all.”

The Mark of MySpace in Popular Culture

The loss of the estimated 53 million data is not just a loss for MySpace’s legacy, but also for recording artists who owe it to the site for their relative commercial success in the music industry.

MySpace was not only the ‘Facebook’ of the mid-2000s; it stood as a platform for artists to record their music way before popular streaming sites like Soundcloud, Spotify, and Apple Music became a thing. Artists and bands like the Arctic Monkeys, Lily Allen, Panic! At the Disco, Ghost, and Bring Me the Horizon are just examples of the many acts that have gained a massive boost in their career after utilizing MySpace’s music-sharing feature. These artists—and other users alike—uploaded their audio files to the site via the MP3 format.

Most artists who have emerged from MySpace were from the spectrum of scene music, where most modern heavy bands have found their success. The influence of MySpace to the success of the scene movement was so powerful and resonant that it gave birth to a whole new sub-genre of music: ‘myspace-core’.

While it can be argued that history was lost after a server migration procedure in MySpace has gone wrong, but the influence that it brought to other facets of the modern internet culture cannot be undermined.