Engaging Fans Through Social Media

Nancy Baym
Professor of Communication Studies
University of Kansas, USA

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Hi and thanks for coming. I see my role here today as being a mediator between fans and musicians, and by extension the people who work with musicians. I'm a Communication professor and a lifelong music fan.

Since the early 1990s, I've been studying fans on the internet. For the last several years I've been conducting research projects about music fans online, especially fans of Scandinavian music. I've also been interviewing musicians, people who run indie labels, and managers. I'm trying to understand and help you understand how social media change the relational dynamics between audiences and artists. When I go to events like this, and when I speak with the people I interview, I hear a lot of excitement about social media, but I also hear a lot of uncertainty and often anxiety. For some musicians, especially those who find it inherently rewarding to socialize with their audience, social media comes naturally. For others, especially those who revel primarily in the making of the music, it's a real challenge.

I assume that most of you have been bombarded by arguments about why you should use social media, so I'm just going to hit on that briefly. What I want to focus on is the kinds of issues and complaints I hear from musicians and I want to offer 12 points of advice to help manage those concerns. Some of the issues I'll talk about are basically technical in nature, but what I want to spend most of the time on are the social concerns these media raise.

One of my main points is that the better you understand what fans value in their interactions with one another and what is at stake when they engage each other online and off, the better you are able to handle the kinds of issues these media raise for musicians. I want to help you see how musicians and audiences can build symbiotic relationships that nurture and sustain one another over the long haul.

The Bright Side

There is a lot of utopianism floating around about how social media can benefit music and musicians so I don't want to belabor the positives, but I do want to hit on a few.
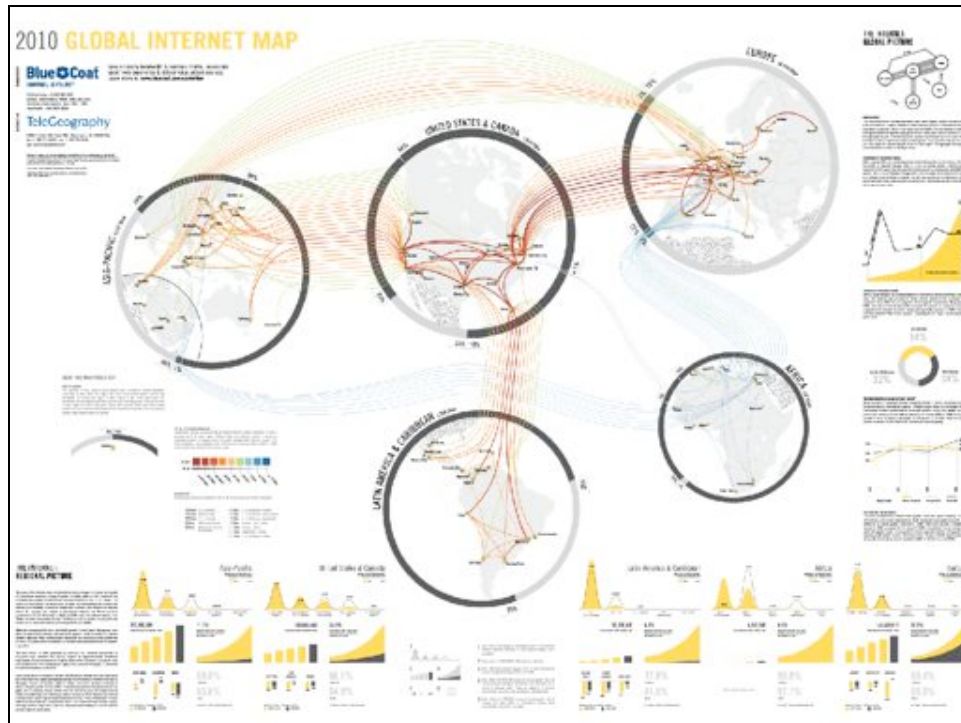
First, as a matter of practical necessity, the audience is already online, hanging out with each other, and you are simply foolish if you don't take advantage of that. Just to throw a few statistics at you – there are 2 billion internet users world wide, 95% of Norwegians are online. A recent study found that 72% of internet users use at least one social network site. Whether you are there or not, the audience is, and they are looking for you and connecting with each other around you.

The people who use social media to connect with music also connect around music in person and in other ways, and I want to talk some about the continuity, but for now I want to emphasize that you can't think of your audience as being online or offline. From their point of view, what happens online is interwoven with what happens offline in countless ways.

http://www.telegeography.com/product-info/map_internet/images/internet_map_2010_lg.png

"With internet you get bands known, and that creates a market for them, both for live shows and selling albums."

Johan Angergård
Club 8
The Legends
Acid House Kings
Labrador Records

The fact that so many people are online also means you've got huge potential to expand your audience although it doesn't happen all by itself.

"Listeners who are into our kind of music, they are more music fans than the general listener. That kind of person has increased in number over last 5-6 years. In Stockholm now there are tons of clubs that play our kind of music. It's 100% file sharing and the internet that we have to thank."
Mattias Lövkvist

Hybris Recordings

What's more, your potential audience is there. Social media and the sharing that often takes place through them can build interest in musical genres or scenes and increase the size of the community that's listening to your kind of music.

"We've become popular in places that if it wasn't for the internet, people wouldn't have heard who we are, just because either people wouldn't have the money to buy the music or there just wouldn't be any promotion. We can pretty much play anywhere. I don't think that would have been the case 20 years ago. I think we would have sold more records 20 years ago just because people bought more records then, but we wouldn't have been able to go places that we go now, like really unusual places like Chile or Indonesia or these kinds of places. I don't think our music would have reached those places before."

Stuart Braithwaite
Mogwai

The internet also gives artists access to international audiences they couldn't reach before. This is more true than ever as internet use takes off in Asia and South America (look back at the chart on the second slide!).

When I talk to people involved with music in small countries like Sweden, Norway, or Spain, they echo the sentiment Stuart Braithwaite from the Scottish band Mogwai expresses here, that the internet may not have led to more album sales, but it has expanded their ability to tour.

"They like the fact that they had this involvement with it, the fact that we had to keep them up to date on what was going on because we had their money, so we felt obliged to say, "Okay, well we're at this stage now and here's a few little samples of what we're doing." All that stuff which made them feel, one, they knew they were financing it and two, they were very much involved with the whole process."
Mark Kelly
Marillion

Social media also offer opportunities for direct fan funding, and, as I'll talk more about, more ways for fans to help musicians produce their work.

Marillion were one of the first bands to fund their albums directly through pre-sales to fans. At one point they realized they had enough money that they could front the costs themselves. But as their keyboard player Mark Kelly told me, ultimately they realized this was a mistake, not for financial reasons, but because of how it cut fans out of the process.

The last bright spot about social media I'll hit on is that they remind us that music is social, as it always has been. In many ways, we are now seeing a return to the kind of social base for music that was overshadowed by the invention of recording technology and the emergence 100 years ago of recording and the rise of music as a business which eventually consolidated into a handful of huge players and a gigantic underbelly of independent and peripheral industries.

In this sense, it's helpful to think of social media as an extension of what has always happened – people gather around music and musicians hang around with and bump into audiences and one another before shows, during shows after shows, in the towns where they live. This is rewarding for audience members, whose own engagement with music is deeply social, but it can also rewarding for musicians who are themselves social beings.

"It's a double-edged sword, the internet"
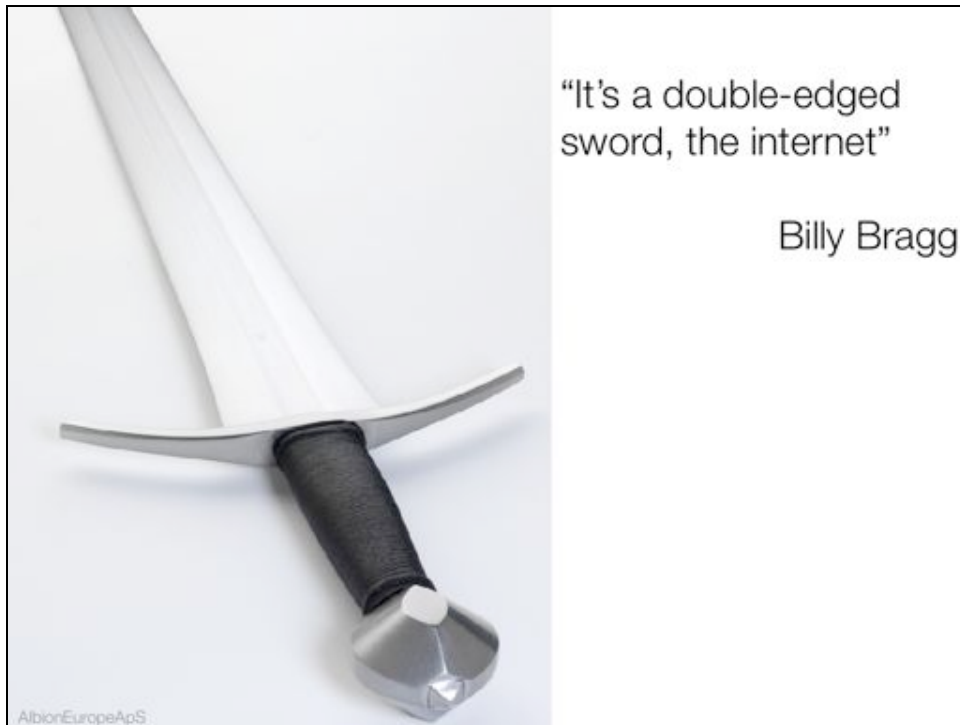
Billy Bragg

So those are some of the perks, but the internet is, as Billy Bragg aptly put it, a double edged sword and I want to turn now to the other edge. First I'm going to zip through a few of the technical sorts of issues I hear when I talk to musicians and offer a few tips for handling them.
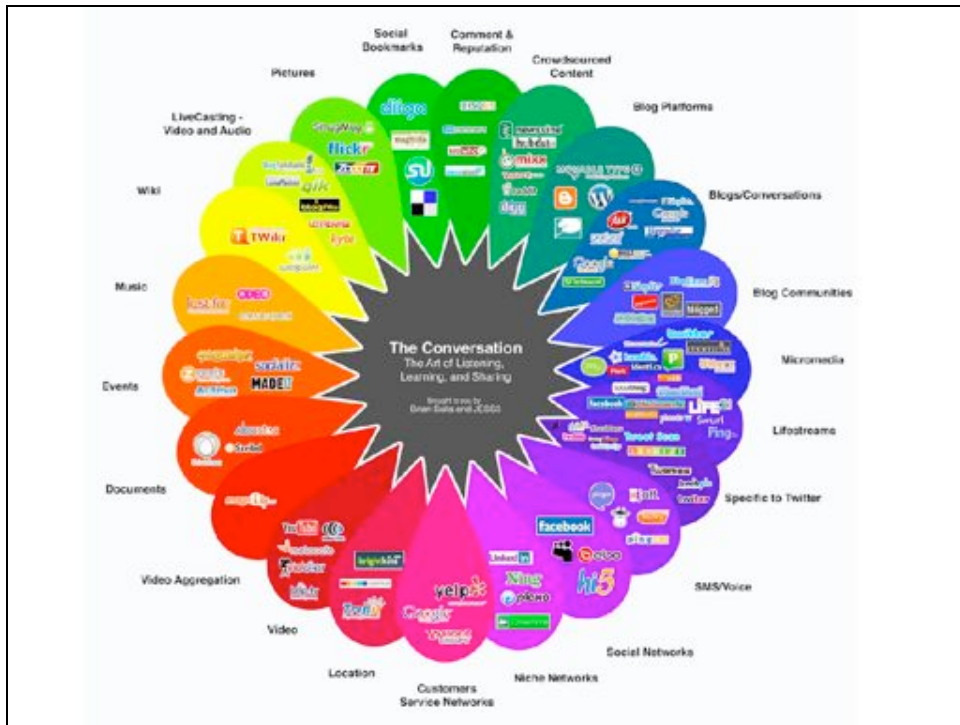
A big issue for many people is that there are an overwhelming number of social media sites and there are new ones everyday. Just keeping up on what is out there can seem like too much work, and that's not even counting building a presence on any of them.

> "One of my misgivings about this whole phenomenon is that people go gaga over one medium and they say "Okay, this is how you do it." And people try it for a very short period of time and the new better medium comes along and everyone just goes wholeheartedly into that. You could see the progress from Myspace to Facebook to Twitter. Everyone just loses their minds at the latest thing, and says "No, this is how you do it." And there's never any sort of consensus. I mean as corrupt and horrible as the old record industry was, at least it was a barely stable way to get the word out about music and get the music out for decades."
>
> Gary Waleik
> Big Dipper

What's more, which one is THE ONE you are supposed to be using seems to change all the time. Big Dipper are an American band who had a modest career in the late 1980s on the indie label Homestead, most famous at that time for Sonic Youth and Dinosaur Jr. They recently recorded a new record after a haitus of twenty years. I love this quote from Gary because it points to the fundamental anxiety that comes from the fact that the whole system has become so ever-changing and unstable.
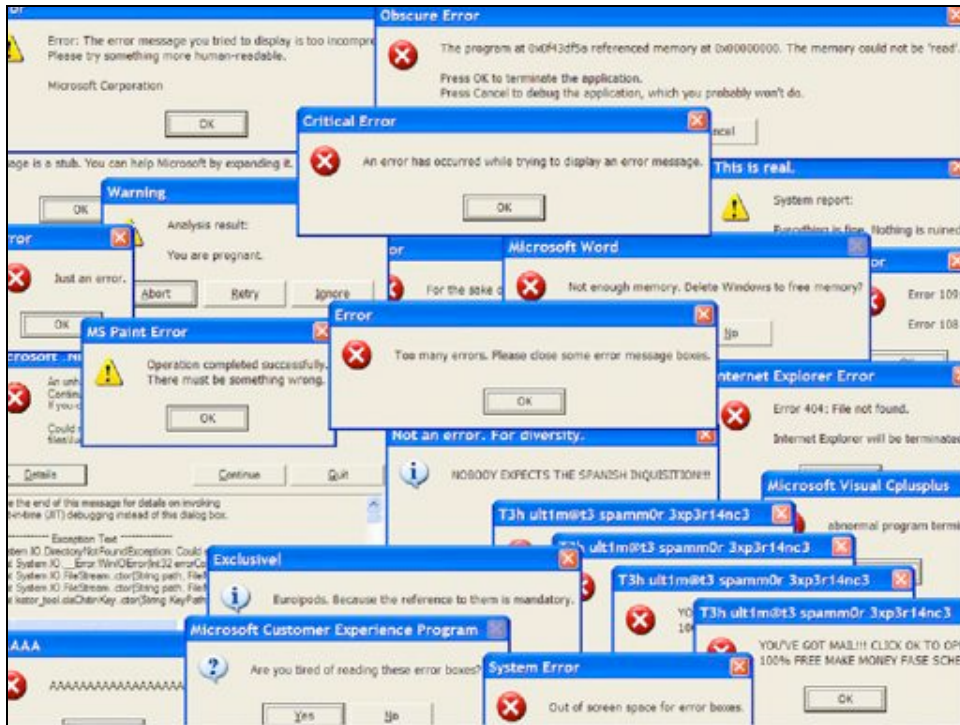
Finally, I hear a lot of complaints about how hard or cumbersome it can be to deal with the limitations of websites, whether it's caps on mailing lists or friend counts, differentiating personal pages from fan pages, trying to get things to look the way you want, or any of many other related problems.

So I have a few bits of advice for handling these kinds of problems.

Maintain your own domain name.

First, make sure you have a site that is all your own. You can't expect fans to cluster around your site rather than being where they hang out anyway, but it is nonetheless is a stable anchor in an ever-changing system.

Myspace is the world's largest repository of band pages. It's also in crisis and potentially for sale. It's conceivable that what was the one place a band HAD to be five years ago will simply not exist five years from now.

How much will how many bands lose if that happens?

Only pick what you can sustain.

Second, I find that musicians often feel pressured to use all of the sites they hear about. That's impossible. It's totally okay to just use one or two. If you're smart about it, you'll set what you use up in a way that feeds into other channels that you don't want to maintain actively. A service like Posterous can be really helpful with this.

People have very different media preferences, and I would urge you to figure out which media fit your lifestyle. Are you highly mobile and you rarely use a computer but love to text? Twitter might be the one for you. Love your smart phone? Maybe Twitter and Facebook. Highly visual? Post videos to YouTube or pictures to Facebook or Flickr. Love hanging out at your computer? Write a blog, build website content.

Relatedly, while I think it's important to respond to some fans some of the time, you don't have to reply to everyone who contacts you, and if you do and they write back, you don't have to keep replying.

It's even okay to choose not to use social media at all.

Just don't jump into media and then abandon them. You should be in it for the long haul.
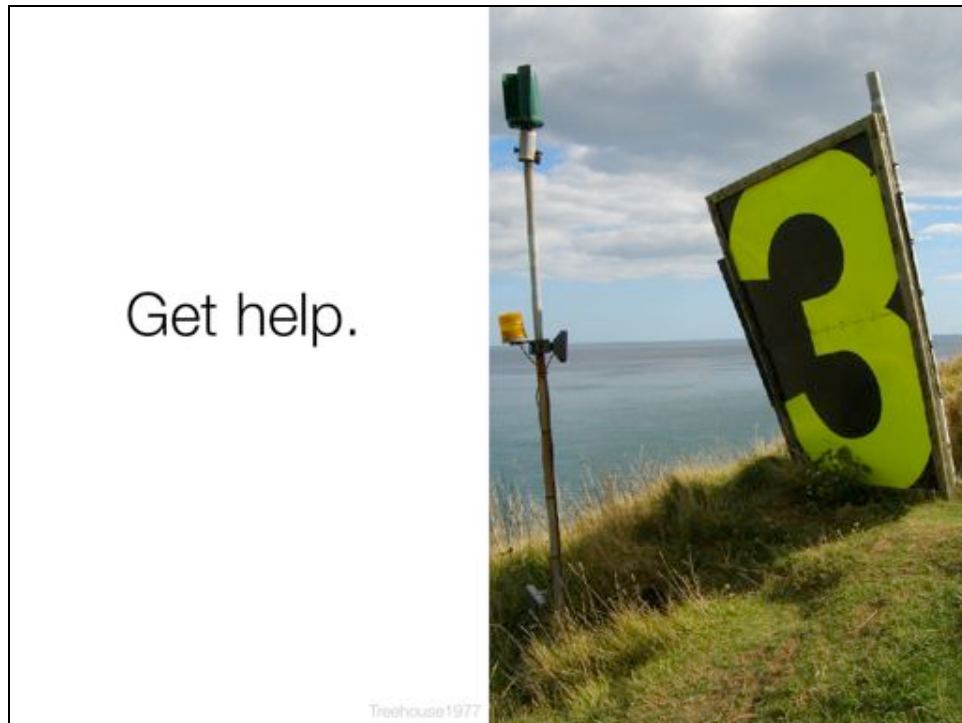
Third, get help. There are many people out there who have talents and will help. This is increasingly part of what managers should be doing for musicians. But it is also something musicians can seek directly.

There are dozens of fan management companies out there that work directly with musicians.

If there's a university nearby, make connections with their media departments to recruit interns.

The audience itself contains a wealth of talent, as I'll mention again and again, and many of them are already going to be doing things to help you online. It's okay to ask them for help in building and spreading your online presence. I've been asked what happens if relations with fans go sour and you don't want those people helping you anymore. The best answer I can offer is that the same thing happens no matter who is helping – if the lines of communication are open so it doesn't come as a shock and the fans are offered good reasons, it's least likely to cause conflict.

"I put my stalkers to work for me"

Jill Sobule

Jill Sobule, for instance, who had a very successful experiment in fan funding for a CD that nonetheless did not sell particularly well, has a beautiful website that captures her artistic personality well. It's designed by one of her "stalkers."

Setting limits on what you engage and allowing others to help also addresses one of the biggest complaints musicians have about social media, which is feeling like they don't have time to keep up and also make their music.

Other issues have to do with communication and relationships, not technology or time management. Once you're using social media, what do you DO?

"It's just this manic stream of trivial information that all these celebrities and artists are spitting out. It's just bullshit and I don't want to be part of it. [Press people] were urging me to start blogging because nothing was going to happen before I started blogging and I thought "what the hell am I going to write?" There was this feeling there had to be continuity, there had to be this stream of information everyday. And that was the whole point, not what I wrote."   Sivert Høyem

One problem for many musicians is what to post or write? Not everyone is chatty and there seems to be a new demand for a constant stream of often personal information.
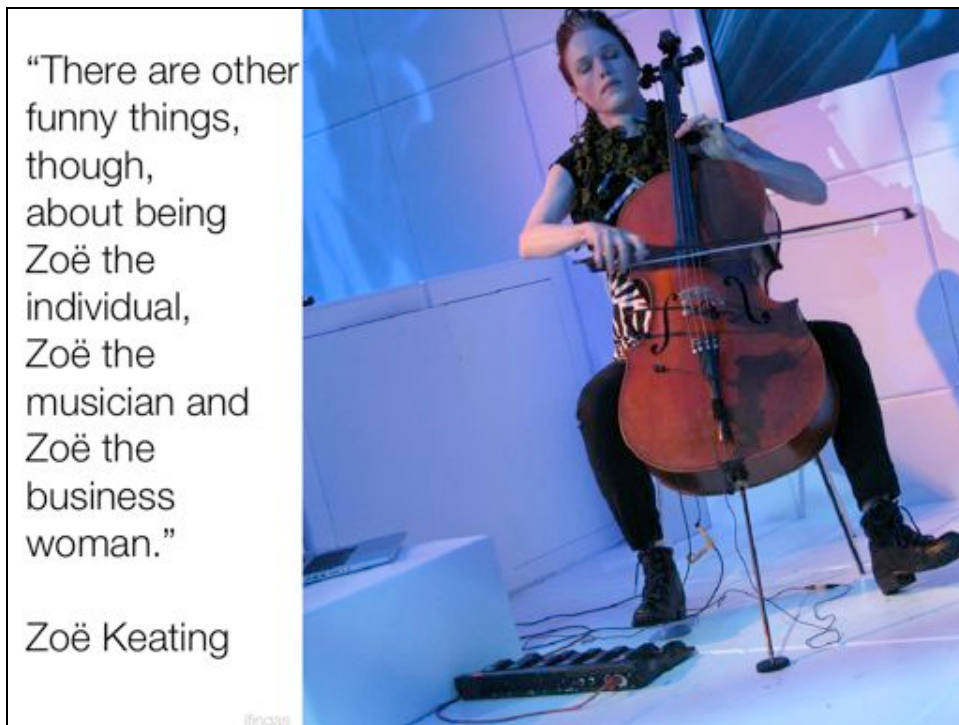
"Now, when people are emailing you and contacting you and @replying you, then you're sort of faced with that question a lot of:

"How much do I want to tell about myself? And where do I want to draw those lines?

But I am in control of it now."

Kristin Hersh

People have very different boundaries about what they are and are not willing to disclose, and this can butt right into the problem of mystique.

"There are other funny things, though, about being Zoë the individual, Zoë the musician and Zoë the business woman."

Zoë Keating

Musicians may have to manage multiple roles in their online presences.

Increasingly they have to sort out the difference between what they will tell friends and what will tell their audience.
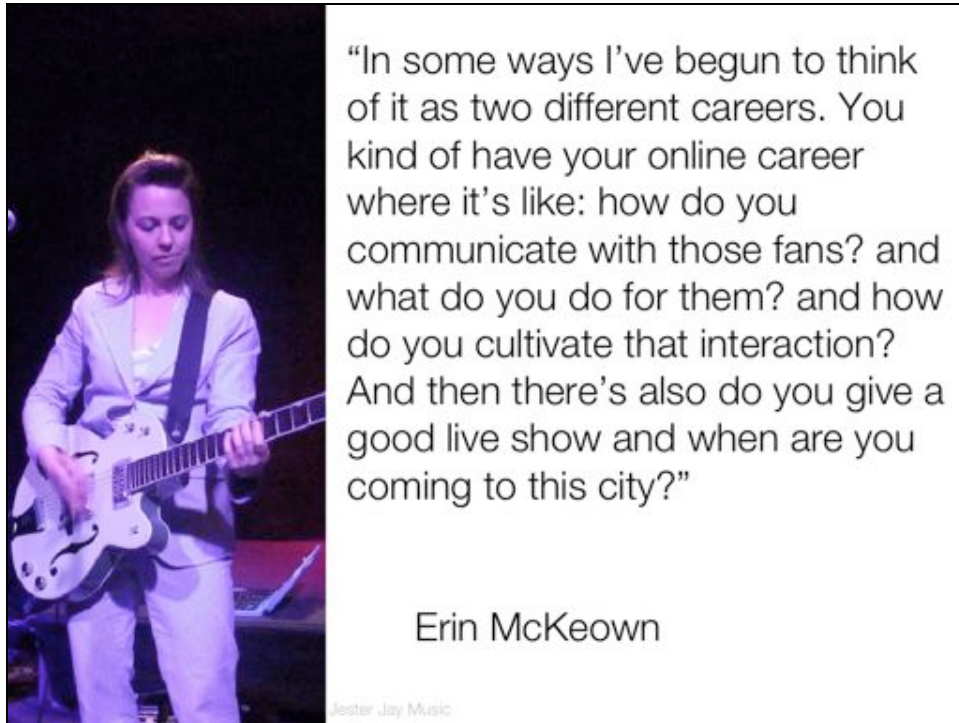
These are decisions that have ramifications for musicians' friends and families as well, since they may well be mentioned or shown in more personal disclosures.

There is not a right or wrong way to draw these lines, though I think it's wise to manage personal disclosure to audiences in a way that supports the broader story that you are telling through your music.

"I write a column for *Q Magazine* every month and the one that's in the current issue is about exactly this. It's about getting unsolicited e-mails from people who tell you that you're shits and that you should shut up and what an asshole you are."   Billy Bragg

Another communication problem musicians face online is what Billy Bragg calls "unsolicited invective." The sad fact is that the anonymity of the internet often frees people up to be mean.

"In some ways I've begun to think of it as two different careers. You kind of have your online career where it's like: how do you communicate with those fans? and what do you do for them? and how do you cultivate that interaction? And then there's also do you give a good live show and when are you coming to this city?"

Erin McKeown

Finally, the last issue I'll mention that comes up in my interviews and observations is that many musicians feel like what happens online doesn't connect with what's happening offline

It's true that there are often no easy ways to draw direct lines of connection between Facebook friends or Spotify listens and how many people show up to hear you play or buy your music.

Understanding Fan Culture

Mooning Over Elvis Presley

Ben Sutherland

Natalie Maynor
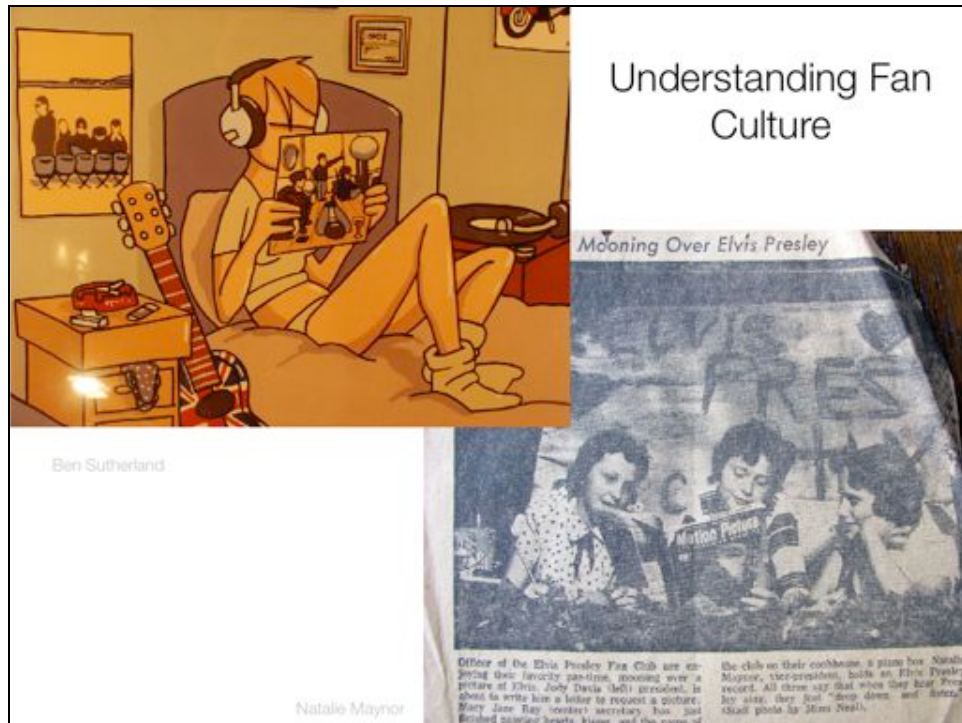
I want to argue that a lot of these issues are easier to manage if you understand fan culture from the fans' point of view and think of the musician's role as supporting and nurturing fan culture.

For musicians, it may seem that fans are increasingly encroaching on what you used to control.

For fans, on the other hand, it seems that musicians are increasingly present in the communities they've been building forever.

The key question moving forward is how these two sets of people, with similar but sometimes seemingly-conflicting interests, can work together for the benefit of both.
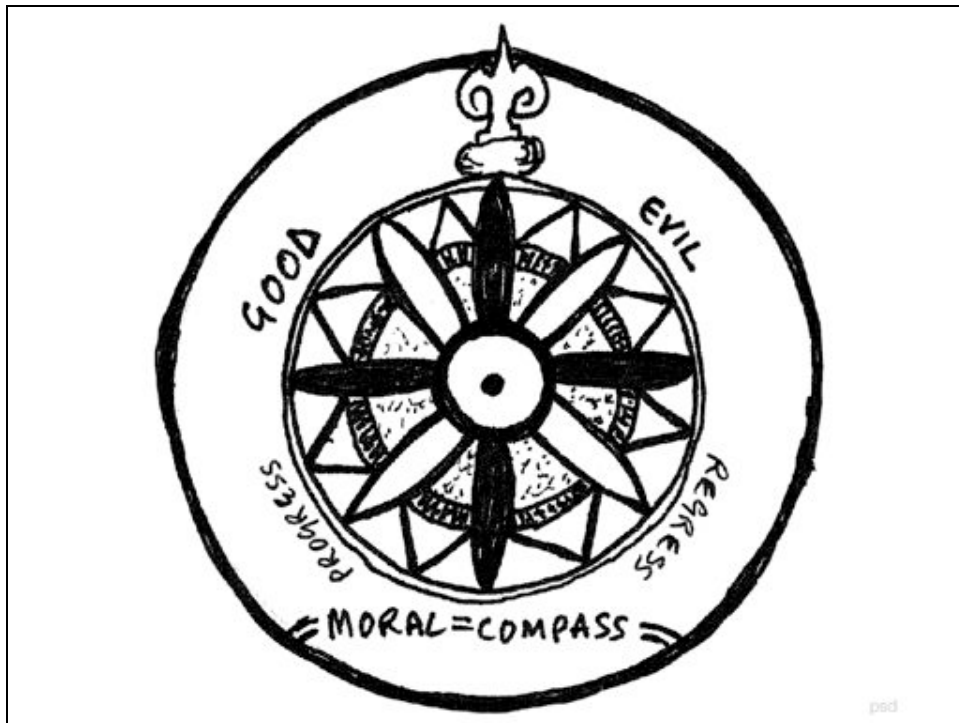
Fan culture is gift culture.

The most important thing to understand about fan culture is that it is based on gifts, not money.

That doesn't mean there's no money involved, but it does mean that even when there is money involved, money tends to function as a gift rather than a payment. This is in direct contrast to music industries approach to audiences as a market.

One of the great challenges for the music industry -- and all creative industries -- is to figure out how to mesh the market culture they're set up to handle with the gift culture of their audience.

So I want to turn now to the question of what is valued in fan culture, and encourage you to think about how musicians can participate in creating value for fans.

It's important to understand that sharing is at the heart of music fans' gift culture. To have music you love and not tell others about it is not just incredibly difficult, it's ethically wrong. Gift cultures are guided by moral rather than a legalistic compasses as they determine what is right and what is fair.

Because they are oriented toward moral guidelines, they operate on the basis of trust. People give on the assumption that they will receive, if not at that time or from that person, then eventually at some other time or from some other person. In gift cultures, giving creates an obligation to give back.

One consequence of cultures built on trust is that the exchanges within them foster personal bonds. It's more meaningful when a friend gives you a record they love than when you buy the same record at a store. Value depends on who gives, and relationship is created and strengthened through the giving.

This can have direct financial consequences for musicians. As Kristin Hersh, who recently fan financed a new Throwing Muses record put it, "if you can see a band, buy a band's recordings and know that there is no middle man collecting, they can't stop giving. They see that we've given and now it's their turn to give."

I'm going to turn now to the specific kinds of things that are valued and shared in fan culture, and offer some advice on how to engage them.

Information

the concert chronology

~ http://www.madrugada.de/chronology.html

Index | News | Live | Discography | Pictures | Videos | Songs | Lyrics | Links | Forum

Presented here is a list of concerts Madrugada have played. As far as it is possible, information about setlists, recordings or other notes are added to the shows. This list is updated when new information surfaces, and does not claim to be one hundred percent accurate. Though efforts are made to keep this list error-free, information is mostly taken from second-hand sources, and experience has shown that errors will occur every now and then. Additions to this list are appreciated at webmaster@madrugada.de. Thank you very much.

Due to the length of this list, it has been made into several sections to make browsing through it a bit easier. Please note that the dates are presented in American format, month/date/year.

Madrugada: 1992-1999 / 2000 / 2001 / 2002 / 2003 / 2004 / 2005 / 2006 / **2007-2008**
Related projects: Milestone Refinery / My Midnight Creeps / Sivert Høyem
Revisions: Revisions made to the concert chronology

One thing fans value a lot is information..

They build amazing repositories of information, acting as curators and editors.

This is a shot of a Madrugada fan page where there is an extraordinarily detailed chronology of every concert they ever played. This was built by and for fans, the band had nothing to do with it.

It's just one example of the many many ways fan pool information to build a "collective" intelligence that is much greater than anything they could experience alone.

Keep your audience up to date.

Artists have information and at the very least this should be available to fans. This might mean posting it everywhere yourself immediately, it might mean making a phone call or sending an email to someone who will get it up there for you, but it's important to let your fans know what's going on.

We can distinguish between information that's about the musician or band and information that's about the people making the music. However you feel about sharing the latter, it's essential that you share information about the music.

There are issues in who should post which information. As a general rule, impersonal information (tourdates, release dates, events, etc) can be shared by people other than the musician. Personal information ought to come from the artist. Many musicians have a split where management or interns handle the impersonal information and they attend only to any personal posting they do.
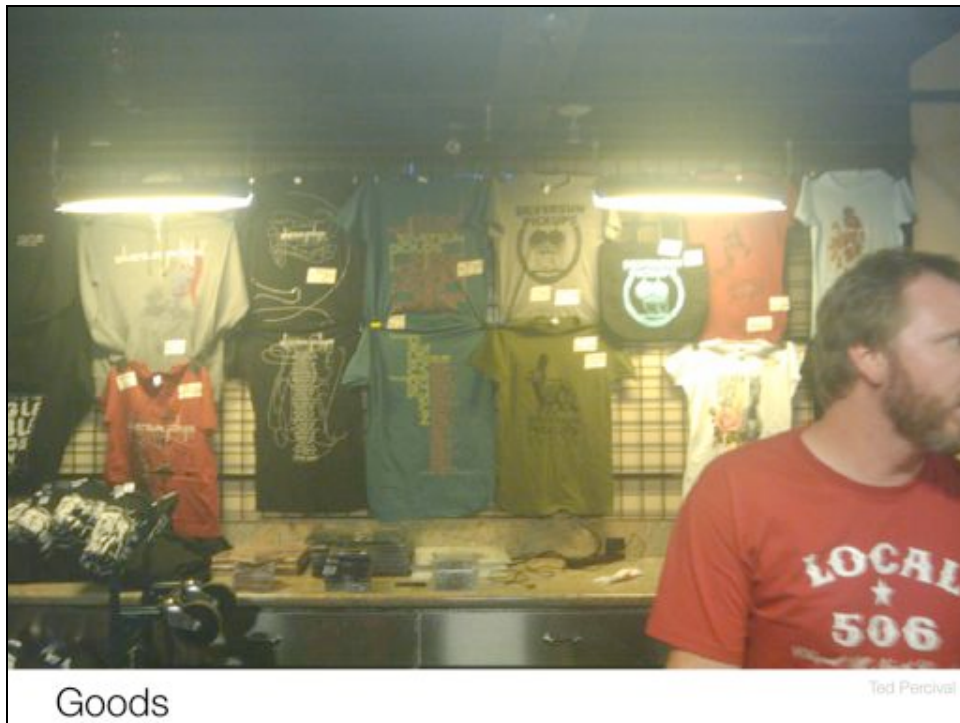
Goods

Fans also value stuff, or what social exchange theorists call "goods." One consequence of recording technology as it happened in the twentieth century is that the music came to be seen as a good, when the real good was the vinyl or the cd or the packaging. There are other tangible goods that made and still make money for musicians like dvds, tshirts, buttons, stickers, and posters.

These make money because fans like to have objects, many like to collect, they like to show others that they are into you, and good provide a concrete way to display that.

Many musicians have shown with special limited releases that people will pay a lot of money for nice goods, especially if they are limited and feel handcrafted.

Fans trade goods with each other, buying gifts, but they also trade goods with artists, bringing them food at concerts and sending them presents for instance.

Fans like stuff. They collect, they give each other things, they show their things off to one another. In the digital realm, goods include sound files, images, videos and so on.

Objects are also a way that online can be reconnected to offline.

Ask what nice objects you can make for your audience.

This leads to the obvious recommendation that you think beyond having a nice cover to making nice stuff, which as Mike Masnick from Techdirt.com puts it, gives fans a "reason to buy."

Social media offer great platforms for selling directly to fans, and you should strongly consider having some way to sell direct. Remember, they'll buy for themselves, but they will also buy for others.
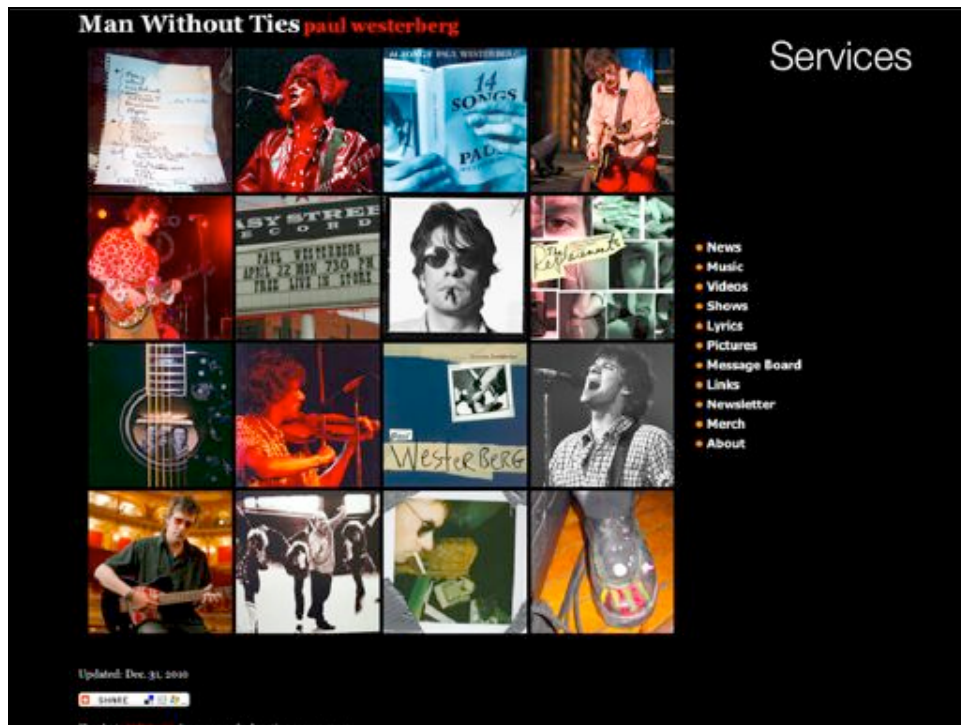
Fans also exchange services with one another, doing things for each other. Building fan sites, like this Paul Westerberg site or the Madrugada site I showed earlier, is one example of the kinds of labor they undertake for one another.

This site is particularly interesting because Westerberg, who doesn't care for social media, handled his disinterest by contacting the woman who built this fan site and asking her to run it as his official site. Now he need only send her the occasional informative email and she and the others at the site run the rest.

Some of the services fans do for one another might strike some artists and problems. They record shows for one another, they upload songs, they figure out guitar chords, they take pictures and make videos.

Ask what new services the internet lets you offer and what it lets your audience do for you.

The net offers a new platform for audiences to provide services to artists – especially promoting them – and it also opens new possibilities for services artists can perform for audiences.

 Examples of services include live streams of concerts, live conversations with artists (Tori Amos, for example, offered one-on-one video chats with fans), and more. These may not gain huge audiences but they may do a lot to create feelings of connection between audiences and artists.
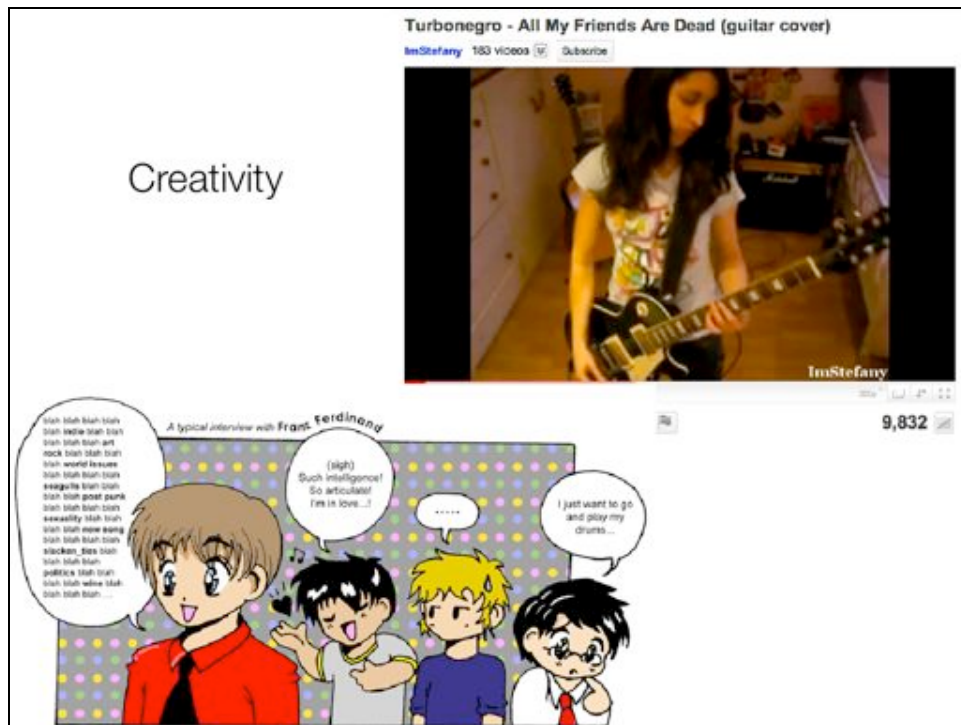
Fans also value creativity.

Artists tend to focus on their own creativity, and that is the locus around which fans organize, but they also use others' art as an opportunity to flex their own creative muscles and they enjoy seeing and hearing one another's creative works.

Some of the things fans make are art, remixes, cover versions, fiction.

Most people don't mind if someone draws a picture of them, but many have trouble with things that feel too close to messing with their own art or personhood, so not everyone feels good about remixes, and many people have issues with fan fiction.

"So that's the thing. If you get fans, they really want to help you. They want to be involved and they want to do stuff like that. They'll make **videos** or they'll make a **drawing** and send it to you and you could put it on a t-shirt. They could make your album **art**. They can really do whatever. **They want to help you**. They want to send you what they do."

Sydney Wayser

Sidney Wayser is an example of an artist who's taking advantage of her fans' creativity – viewing it as services they provide her rather than as threats to her creativity.

Encourage creativity.
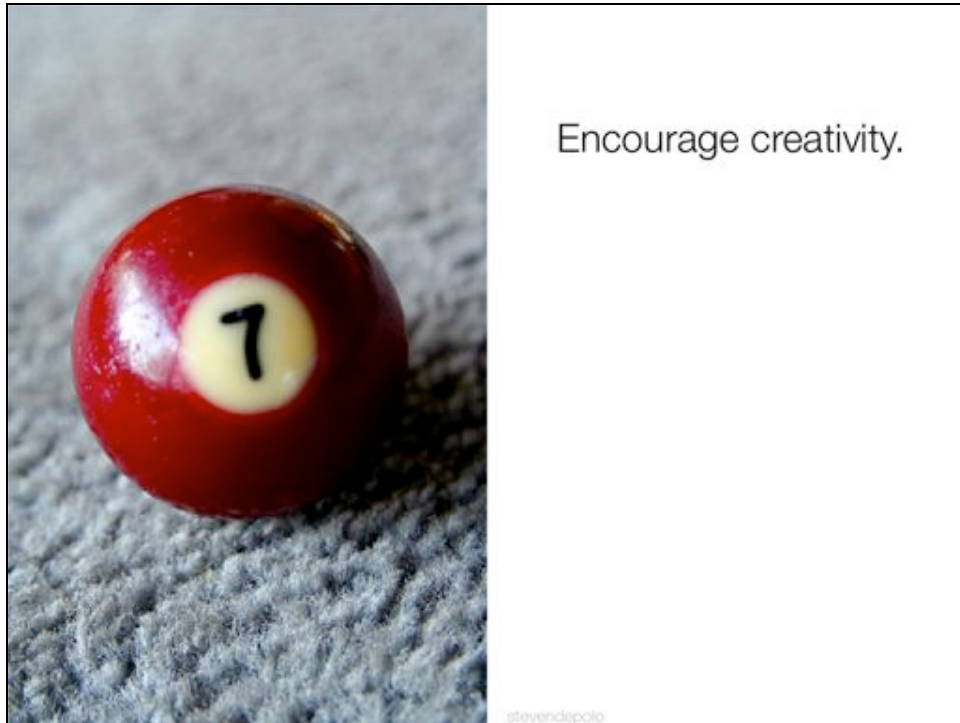
Not everyone's going to want fans to do their design as she suggests, but there are other ways to encourage people to be creative.

The thing is that fans are going to create, whether you want them to or not, whether you encourage them or not, whether you offer them officially sanctioned platforms for doing it or not.

This can be a hard one for some musicians, especially when it feels like their creativity poaches on your own or distorts what you had done and makes it into something you don't like.

But on the other hand, this is part of what it means to connect with music, and most musicians were initially inspired by the creativity of those that came before them.

"I have to trust in the gift economy idea. Because honestly at the end of the day I would rather be surrounded by people that I know and love that are creative and that are moving and changing cultural currents than to isolate myself in the conversation of infringement and the limits it puts on the art. It puts us in the corner that's not as interactive and that's not as alive."

Stephen Mason
Jars of Clay

Many musicians I talk to are inspired by the creativity of their audience.

I like Steve Mason's take on it, because he draws the links between artistic creativity, audience creativity, sociality and life.

Fans also value emotions and an important part of fandom is sharing those feelings, both good and bad. Fans feel happiness, sadness, anticipation, grief. They get crushes, they get mad. They don't always agree with one another on which emotions are appropriate when.

The lines between the feelings they have about music can blur easily into feelings for musicians, which can be confusing for everyone, but which can also result in tremendous amounts of love and warmth getting sent to musicians through social media.

There are few things that make fans happier than getting love and warmth back from musicians. A reply to a comment on Facebook or an email can be an easy way to return some of that emotion.

Fans also feel love and affection for each other and use their shared feelings to build friendship and companionship with one another.

Let them feel
what they feel.
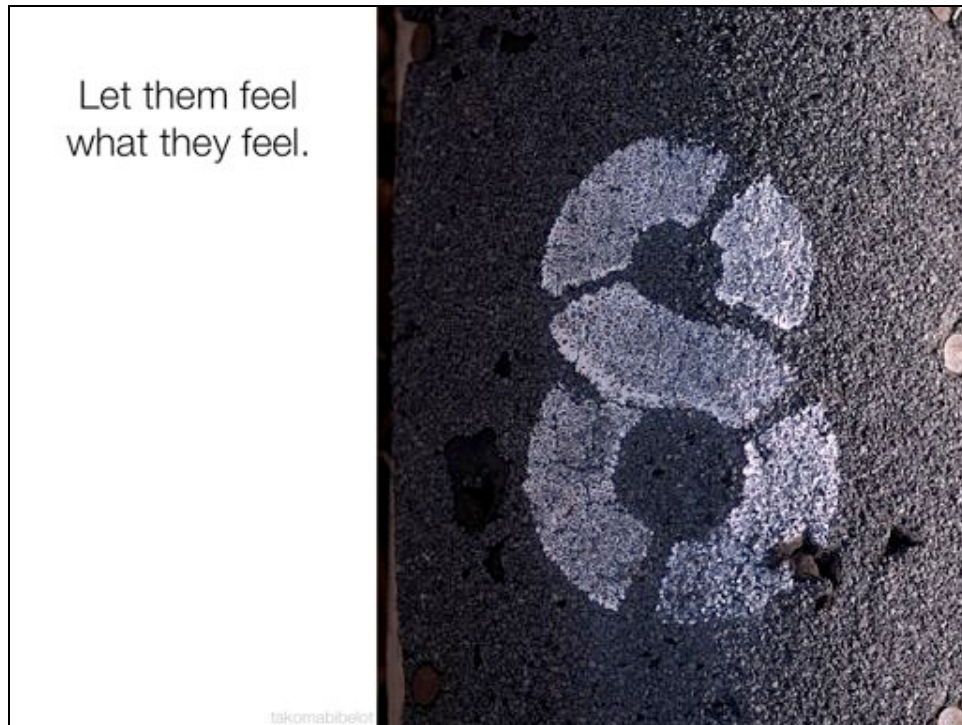
So my eighth piece of advice is just to respect feelings.

In fact, this is just a good rule for life.

People are going to feel what they're going to feel. You can't change it.

From the point of view of a musician, that they are emotionally engaged means they're paying attention and they care. That's great. Don't focus on the people whose feelings bring you down.

The last valued thing in fans' gift culture that I'll discuss is interpretation.

Fans interpret lyrics, songs, career arcs, shows, outfits, haircuts, you name it – if it can be interpreted, they're liable to interpret it.

This also means they are going to be critical. To the musician, their interpretations may be wrong, they may be inappropriate, they may be offensive. As the quote I put up from Billy Bragg earlier suggests, they can also be rude.

Get thick skin

The only solution for this is to let your skin get thick. You have to be able to deal with people saying things about you that you don't like. When I talk to older musicians, they describe this as something that took time to learn.

Some people choose not to look, especially to what is being said on sites they don't manage. Others have someone else who filters through it and points them to the things worth reading and away from what's hurtful.

Billy Bragg and Stuart Braithwaite have both been at this a long time and they've got thick skin. "If you allow people to put you on a pedestal, says Bragg, "you can't complain when pigeons shit on your head." Braithwaite also has perspective. He told me, "If the worst thing that's happened to you is someone saying they don't like your band on the internet, then you're doing ok."

Identity

I'm going to wrap up pretty soon here, but I want to touch on two larger issues that are at stake as audiences exchange these things they value amongst themselves.

One thing audiences are doing is building identity. I like this picture of an Indigo Girl fan's car both because it shows how she is using them as a way of showing who she is, but also because it shows how her identity as an Indigo Girls fan is tied up in other identities she's claiming (queer and perhaps liberal) as well as how it stands alongside other identities that work together to comprise herself – an American, a Democrat, a peacenik, and, judging from the car, perhaps a person who is frugal and concerned with gas mileage.

People differentiate themselves from each other by claiming favorite music. An analysis of favorite band lists on Myspace a few years ago showed that friends' lists were more different from one another than similar – we bond over music, but we also differentiate ourselves through music.

Fans also build identities within fan communities, gaining prestige and status when they contribute to the fan collective in some way or getting to be known by others for their role within the fan culture.

For musicians, it can help to know who's who in the audience and to spread your love around.
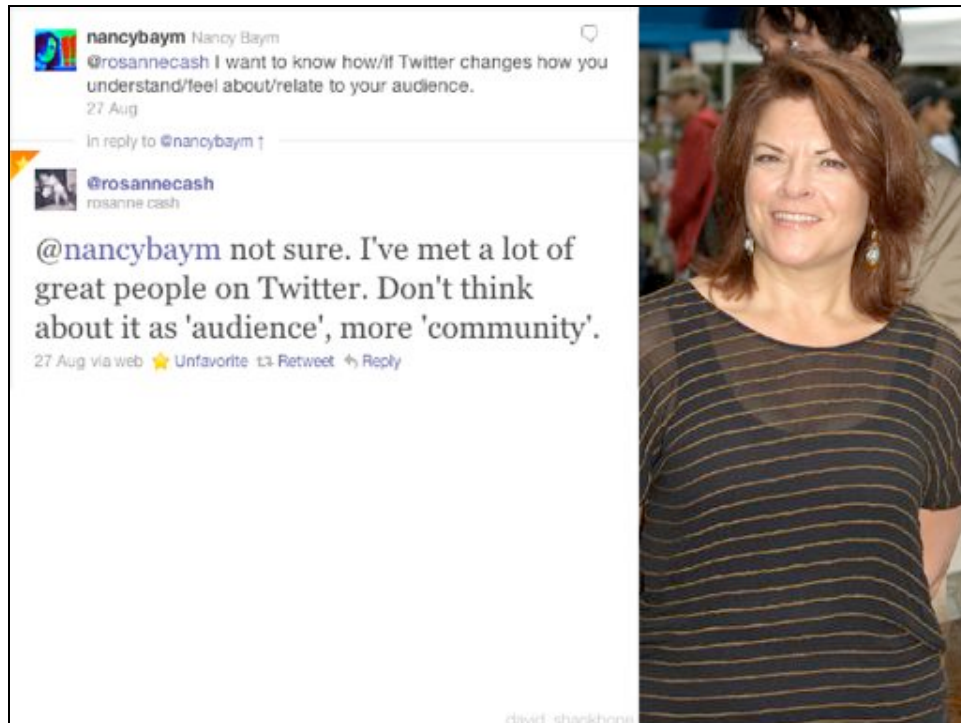
It's always a good idea to treat them as individuals: ask them questions, ask what they think, respond to them.

In addition to identities, people also build community by being fans. One of the cool things about social media is how much they enhance this potential to form a real sense of a collective.

Musicians bear a funny relationship to these collectives because they form around them, yet they can't always be members, and they can rarely be leaders. Most of the artists I talk to who have a strong sense of fan community view themselves as having to be apart from it. One artists referred to them as his "stepfamily."

This is a picture of fans of Norwegian band Turbonegro who have created a fan uniform – denim jacket with your local chapter emblazened across the back – and sailor cap. When I spoke with band member Happy Tom he explained that at these gatherings fans are not particularly interested in talking to the band members, they're there for each other. Mark Kelly described the same phenomenon at the regular Marillion fan gatherings where thousands of fans spend three days holed up together having fun being Marillion fans.

nancybaym Nancy Baym
@rosannecash I want to know how/if Twitter changes how you understand/feel about/relate to your audience.
27 Aug
in reply to @nancybaym ↑

@rosannecash
rosanne cash

@nancybaym not sure. I've met a lot of great people on Twitter. Don't think about it as 'audience', more 'community'.
27 Aug via web ⭐ Unfavorite ⟲ Retweet ↩ Reply

Many musicians find that their use of social media changes their own relationship to their fans from one in which they are in the clear power positions to ones that feel much more like communities of which they are a part.

It's so important that musicians support this wherever else it happens and, to the extent possible, remain connected with and feeding community. This is what will sustain a career over the long haul. People will keep going to shows even if they don't like you anymore if they love the people that also go to those shows. Billy Bragg told me he's been approached by ex-fans at his concerts who are quite clear that they don't like him anymore, but they still love the friends they've made in his community of fans so much that they continue to support his career.
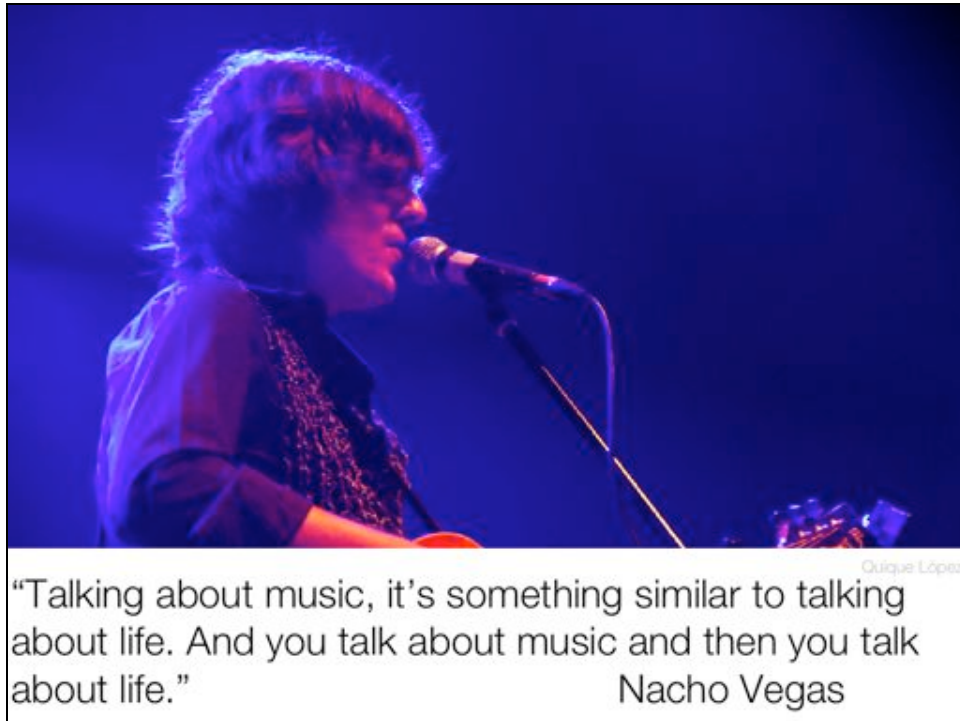
Remember: It's not really about you.

Nicholas Kennedy Sitton

When you are clear that fans are using your music to build their own identities and communities it makes it easier to engage them because it means you don't have to make it all about you.

You can talk about other things! You can ask them questions, you can listen to them. You don't have to perform all the time.

Erin McKeown is a musician who is uncomfortable with personal disclosure and wants a clear line between her fans and her friends. She has found that sports offer a neutral ground on which she can enthusiastically engage her fan community. She told me "I certainly also appreciate when people write me and email and say like "your music was so important to me in my breakup" or when someone stops me and says "you Ella Fitzgerald and Billie Holiday, you're the ones" but that's not a conversation, that's just like a one sided thing. I'll just say thank you. Whereas like baseball, we can have a conversation."

"Talking about music, it's something similar to talking about life. And you talk about music and then you talk about life."

Nacho Vegas

When we think of talking about music as a part of being part of community, it takes us back to the social nature and value of music. It reminds us how music builds personal connections that are life affirming.

I've been really interested to hear in my interviews that one thing musicians often describe as particularly rewarding is hearing from fans that their music helped them deal with the death of a loved one. I think this is because those interactions show so clearly that music is life affirming, but that's just a stark case of the more general experience of finding interactions with audience members affirming.

Think of social media as more sites for buiding your story.

So with that I am going to leave you with two pieces of advice that I hope can pull this together.

People who work with fans of stories talk about "transmedia storytelling" which describes how they build storyworlds through the main narrative (the TV show, the movie, the comic book) but also through other platforms like websites, games, books, advertising and so on.

In music, the storyline is not always so clear, but there is always a story there. It's part of the image you project, the ways you package your music, the backstory you bring to bear in interviews.

Think of social media as a way to extend the story you are telling through your music. Fans are engaged in the sounds but they also care about the story.

If you work to keep the information and interactions you have consistent with the image and storyline you are projecting, questions of what to post and how to deal with the sorts of things that fans do can be much easier.

Give fans ways to participate in your story.

Finally, never underestimate fans' desire to participate in telling your story. They tell their friends and peers. The more tools you give them to tell that story, the more they can spread it around. At the same time, letting fans tell the story means you have to give them gaps to fill in.

On my way here I visited with some musicians from Oslo who were in the States recording. One of the band members, Bez, whom some of you may know, commented that even though their new band, Kitchie Kitchie Kimeo, has only played three gigs in two years, released nothing, and has a minimal presence online, the fans are nonetheless talking about them. The fans are building the story for them, telling tales of mystique and mystery.

A psychologist once wrote that humans are "storytelling animals." Social media provide platforms for you to build your story and for you to engage fans in writing and telling that story for others. Let them.

Questions? Thank you!

nancy@onlinefandom.com   twitter: nancybaym