

## Oklahoma musicians reach audiences with social media

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### Abstract

"My life as a singer and songwriter gives me the chance to connect with people and connect to the greater world about me," [Clifford] said. "And the fans and audiences want access, which is the difference between the music industry now and 10 or 20 years ago. Social media has diluted the marketplace in a way that people like me can offer a little picture into my life for those who like my music. Social media is all about an exchange, a conversation, not just, 'Hey, look at me. Look at what I'm doing.' For me, social media is about reaching out one-on-one to people who care about what I do." "Suddenly I have a connection to people even before the show. It builds excitement," she said. "They feel like they're getting the 'pre-game.'" "I write songs that I hope speak to people, and it's a weird privacy thing that people get access to my heart," she said. "They can go buy my disc and find out what's going on in my life. So it's definitely a personal risk to step out and say, 'I'm going to open a little bit more of a window into my life for people.' But the rewards outweigh the risks of building a community of people who are passionate about what I do."

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### Full text

Singer-songwriters have always wanted to connect with their fans - through the lyric that touches them or the riff that keeps them coming back for more.

But social media, especially for independent artists, can be an additional tool for building loyalty and marketing their music.

Local artist K.C. Clifford has successfully leveraged Twitter and Facebook, along with her Web site and blogs, to let her fans know more about who she is and what's next in her career. But for Clifford, social media is far more about building relationships than about providing information.

"My life as a singer and songwriter gives me the chance to connect with people and connect to the greater world about me," Clifford said. "And the fans and audiences want access, which is the difference between the music industry now and 10 or 20 years ago. Social media has diluted the marketplace in a way that people like me can offer a little picture into my life for those who like my music. Social media is all about an exchange, a conversation, not just, 'Hey, look at me. Look at what I'm doing.' For me, social media is about reaching out one-on-one to people who care about what I do."

Clifford plays many out-of-state shows and often meets in person the people who have become her Facebook friends or those who follow her on Twitter. It also serves a public relations purpose - an existing Facebook friend may send a concert announcement to 10 others, who learn about Clifford's music before they ever hear her in person. It's also far less expensive and time-consuming than trying to secure publicity for a show.

"Suddenly I have a connection to people even before the show. It builds excitement," she said. "They feel like they're getting the 'pre-game.'"

Some of her online interaction with fans revolves around music, such as her feedback to their favorite songs. But their conversations focus on many other topics, such as her weight-loss journey and love of running. She said it's what she would be doing if she were talking to people in person - finding out common interests and learning about each other through them.

David Broyles, Clifford's husband and a singer in his own right - his band is Dr. Pants - teams with her on social media strategy, and they mutually "re-tweet" each other's events. Broyles said Clifford's skill with social media has resulted in a greater devotion to her music.

"It's made an impact on people because they know she's a nice person who really does want to have conversations with them," Broyles said. "That has been pretty revelatory."

But using social media also is all about balance, Clifford said. If she spent too much time online and not enough time writing songs, her career would go downhill, she said. She also maintains boundaries so she's not relinquishing all of her privacy.

"I write songs that I hope speak to people, and it's a weird privacy thing that people get access to my heart," she said. "They can go buy my disc and find out what's going on in my life. So it's definitely a personal risk to step out and say, 'I'm going to open a little bit more of a window into my life for people.' But the rewards outweigh the risks of building a community of people who are passionate about what I do."

Clifford often speaks to music industry groups about the do's and don'ts of social media. She encourages artists who are newly interested in social media to be reciprocal - follow back the people who follow you on Twitter and accept their friendships on Facebook. And while tweeting, don't talk about yourself all the time.

"It's the rule of personal relationships - be more interested than interesting," she said. "You want to have the kind of exchange with people that is meaningful and not just about you."

Clifford also has wielded the power of social media to help finance the cost of her fourth album, *Orchid*, which is due out March 2. Her "Be My Record Label" project has resulted in \$20,000 in donations to pay for the production of her album, which she wanted to take to a higher level of recording and promoting. Although it was difficult to pose the partnership to her fans, when she first talked about it at a show, someone walked up to her afterward with a \$1,000 check, she said. Since then, she's kept them updated on the recording, design and manufacturing process. For each donation level, Clifford offered several perks, from autographed CDs to a private house concert.

"When the most horrible financial crisis our country has seen since 1929 happens, and people are all of a sudden opening their pocketbooks to help you make this little dream of yours come true, that's incredible," she said.

Credit: April Wilkerson

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