

It's 2018, and sadly, long gone are the days of lining up outside of Karma Records for concert tickets. We've delved well into the age of selling your soul for Ticketmaster fees, and this in itself is old news. As much as we hate to admit it, algorithms are the current driving source of success for independent musicians. Knowing how to utilize to the fullest extent the various social medias fronting these algorithms is becoming as much a necessity as it is a temperamental and varied science. Label executives have a convenient advantage in being able to hire social media specialists, but, needless to say, we cannot all be so lucky. Independent artists are forming a new relationship with social media, as they step forward into a time that demands they take the promotion of their success into their own hands, and learn to outwit an elusive system and earn their recognition.

All of this is not to say that success in the broad sense of the term stems directly from one's success on social media, but this is indisputably a divining factor. Widespread platforms like Facebook theoretically give everyone the chance to reach a global audience, the key word being, of course, theoretically. Facebook's algorithms in particular are notoriously choosy in what content they allow to appear on their newsfeeds. Article upon article can be found detailing tips and tricks for circumnavigating the watchful eye of the algorithms, but true specialists study social media promotion and marketing for years. Succeeding on social media isn't impossible, but it has also developed in recent years into something potentially inaccessible for independent artists already attempting to juggle the responsibilities of a DIY band, as opposed to the resources that large labels might be able to provide. Being "discovered", though a dream of many who spent their formative years in close familiarity with the 90s/00s rock scene, is no longer as easy or accessible as it once was made out to be.

Though clear that social media has revolutionized the way independent artists share content, it has also changed the way artists create and audiences interact with said content. The widespread availability of low cost media content enforces an overly saturated market, and forces the artist to continually push boundaries to create content that will trick algorithms and stir an emotional response from a generally desensitized audience. Social media has essentially created an active audience that begs to be entertained. Whether this is good or bad is a matter of opinion, but the fact remains that artists are being forced to make audiences care about what they create in a way that seems to play a much larger role in the actual development of music and video content following the rise of social media platforms as a sole source of content sharing. Artists prior to this social-media era definitely employed similar philosophies, but were not forced to keep up with the concept of rapid-paced "trending media" or the fickle subtleties surrounding instantaneous and constant connection with their peers.

With this craving for a steady stream of entertainment comes a much shorter attention span. While the average musician sees Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter as somewhat of a business platform, the average user most likely does not. Grabbing the attention of this average user is the first challenge, but the second challenge has become learning to keep this attention. Facebook algorithms in particular favor videos under one minute in length, catering to an audience absorbed, statistically, in the quantity rather than the quality of their media. These stipulations explain the rise in popularity for short promotional previews for music videos and brief songs clips and covers in particular. Additionally, with Facebook featuring auto play videos specifically accommodating an individual user's interests, the fight to capture and keep attention does not appear to be easing up any time soon. More and more artists are changing the way they present and promote their brand in order to keep up with a changing, online-driven society.

All in all, social media has inarguably made major changes to the music industry as a whole, and plays an important role for independent musicians pursuing a serious career. However, while offering some definite benefits, social media presents challenges that independent artists must overcome in order to really see the value of social media and not simply feel its negative effects.

Musicians are beginning, more and more, to research marketing tactics and reach out to locally owned media management companies for help in expanding their reach and staying ahead of these new obstacles and challenges, and this appears to be something that will continue in large capacity going forward.