

# RECURRING

By Katy Krassner



## Instagram For The Songwriter

This social vehicle can deliver surprising effectiveness for musical promotions

OK, here's the situation. You're a reasonably successful musician. You write music, you play out, people come to see you, you sell music at your shows. In other words, you're making a living. You have a website, because everyone told you to, including your booking agent. Your cousin helps you update it. You also have a Facebook page where you promote your live dates, but that's it. You don't post that you're "at Starbucks" or "Wow, that football game was exciting." You're so *not* into this whole social media thing...

Then someone writes an article in *Recording* telling you that you should be on Instagram. *Instagram!* Isn't that for kids? You're not wasting your time on Instagram. Or should you...?

Yes, you should! There are many good reasons, but here's the primary one. It's easy! If you have a smart phone—and if you're a traveling musician, you do—it is super simple to upload a photo from your phone and caption it. And that's really it. Instagram is a native smartphone app (i.e. you can't update Instagram from your computer), and for someone who is on the road at least half the year, there is visual CONTENT to share. Whether it's backstage in Des Moines or on the highway in Albany, or even in your studio working on tracks, there are so many great photos right at your fingertips. It's really worth giving it a shot—who knows, you may find you have an eye for it (puns intended).

So OK, it's simple, but as long as you're going to do it, don't half step it. With that in mind, here are a few tips to get you on your way.

*Behind-the-Scenes:* Anything your audience wouldn't normally be able to see is worth posting. Backstage, catering, the tour bus—things they don't have access to is what they'd really like a sneak peek of. If you're a home-studio type, show off pretty instruments or feature guest musicians who've stopped by to help you get creative.

~ *Travel* : Some people who follow Instagram never leave their hometown, let alone home state. If you're on the road, show everyone. Take photos of signs that say "Entering Phoenix," a particularly old-school rest stop, or one of the last drive-up diners in Tennessee.

~ *Smile, you're on Candid Camera:* People love to be part of the action. Take a few photos from the stage and post them. Fans will start to take note that you're doing this after each show and look for themselves in your photos... which drives more people to come to your concerts and songwriter showcases, and get hooked by your music.

~ *Milk it:* Hey, you've got a living to make. Remember Flat Stanley, the grade school assignment where you sent a paper cutout of Stanley to all the people you knew in different states and then did a report on it? Well, anything you're selling is the new Flat Stanley! Take a photo of your EP in the van! Snap some merch piled up high backstage! Take a photo of an on-sale link to an upcoming show and post it!

~ *Hashtag:* Hashtagging pictures on Instagram means you are "filing that image in a larger folder where the contents all share the same hashtag." You can add "#RockNRoll" or "#PopMusic" to all your posts, that way they will be added to that searchable term. Even though you can use up to 30 hashtags, it is recommended that you keep it to around 5 to 7 hashtags per photo.

~ *Encourage your audience:* Let your followers know you want to see their pics. Tell them to post photos of you they've taken and to tag the shot. For example, after posting a live shot, caption it "Post your own pic from tonight's show and tag '#BandNameRULES!'. It's fun and it builds community.

Have I convinced you yet? With your smartphone helping you along, it's easy enough to get your feet wet with Instagram. It's not terribly time-consuming, and most people really enjoy it once they get going.

Remember, though—as with any social media, consistency is key. If you're not going to keep it up, or you're only going to post when you have a product to move, don't bother. In the meantime, download a couple of photo editing apps and check it out! ☺