

‘You can become great friends through social media,’ said Brian Travers, saxophone player for British reggae band UB40, ‘you can really be honest, really talk.’ Steve Lawson, an ambient solo bass player from England who has written more than 80,000 tweets, described friendship as the most important part of his musician-audience relationships:

I’m making friends with people who listen to my music and then I became a part of their life and they become a part of mine. And I am truly enriched by that. And the music becomes the soundtrack to that relationship.

‘I don’t like to call them fans,’ said O’Donnell, ‘Not anymore. They’re more like friends, people that are interested in my music and what I’m doing. [I get] three or four [emails] a day, and I’ll answer, and I have good conversations with people.’

—Baym, p.294

- Why do some artists do this and others don’t?
- Why do you think Baym doesn’t explore the reasons artists use social media so differently?

The concept of 'celebrity,' and - perhaps by extension - 'fan', entail power differential. Some of the musicians I spoke with valued that differential, not because it made them feel important, but because they believed their music's effect depends on it. Others thought it great that the internet lessened power differences by increasing accessibility. In between were those who wanted both equality and distance. In short, public figures have differing attitudes toward power and closeness with their audiences online. They are in uncharted and ever-changing waters, making it up as they go along.

—Baym, p.312

- Do you have experience of this as an artist? If so, how did you respond?
- Do you agree that the line between 'fan' and 'friend' is as blurred as Baym suggests?