

## Artist Stalking In A Social Media Age

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*by Randy Obrien*

The popularity of social media websites like Twitter, Facebook and MySpace have lowered the barrier between artists and celebrities, creating for some fans, a false sense of intimacy. When the adoration turns into obsession, the unwanted attention from a fan could become dangerous and deadly.



[1]

Jeffery Bilyeu

Stalking is defined legally as a person who intentionally and repeatedly follows or harasses another person in such a manner as would cause that person to be in reasonable fear of being assaulted, suffering bodily injury, or death. Recent examples of stalking incidents include actresses and celebrities like Paris Hilton, Jennifer Anniston, Miley Cyrus and many more. A young man who had stalked her, believing he had established an intimate relationship with her, murdered actress Rebecca Schaeffer in 1989.

Personal security expert **Jeffery R. Bilyeu**, President of [The Bilyeu Group](#) <sup>[2]</sup>, a security firm in Nashville, says there are precautions that victims of stalkers can take to be safe. Bilyeu advises his clients to keep a detailed log of any suspicious, or stalking-related activities. Recording this information is vital for restraining order applications or criminal prosecution. "The log will also be utilized as a tool to preserve your memory of individual incidents," Bilyeu said.

According to **Captain Michele Donegan** of Metro Nashville's Police Domestic Violence Division says, if the matter goes to court, the information gathered by the stalking victim could be called upon for testimony. This log must include any harassing phone calls, letters, email messages, acts of vandalism, and even threats communicated through third parties. Once reported to the Police, Bilyeu said, "You must always obtain the Officer's name and badge number for your records, and make sure you obtain a copy of the report".

If you have any photographs of the stalker, place it with all detailed reports. Bilyeu recommends giving friends and family members photographs of the alleged stalker. You should create a chart with the date, time, description of incident, location, and any witnesses, (making sure to get names, phone numbers, and addresses). Also, if any electronic surveillance footage is available, make a copy and place in a secure location.

Experts advise installing home security systems at home, and Donegan says something as simple as a cordless phone can be one way a stalker can find out victims movements. "People can pick them up with scanners." She advises victims to be extra vigilant when in public places and call in experts before a possible stalking incident gets out of control."

Bilyeu advise clients to be proactive regarding potential stalking cases because in rare cases it could be a matter of life and death.

According to the Stalking Resource Center of the National Center for Victims of Crime Stalking could involve as many as 3.4 million people each year in the U-S. For more information about stalking, visit [www.ncvc.org/src](http://www.ncvc.org/src).<sup>[3]</sup>

*(Randy O'Brien is an award-winning print and radio journalist. He is a past-President and board member of the Tennessee Associated Press Broadcast Association and a published novelist.)*

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[2] The Bilyeu Group: <http://www.bilyeugroup.com>

[3] www.ncvc.org/src.: <http://www.ncvc.org/src>.

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