

## **The Effects of COVID-19 on Norwegian Artists**

An explorative research of Norwegian artists' wellbeing and  
work life during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## **ABSTRACT**

In this thesis the focus mainly lies on how Norwegian artists were reported during the COVID-19 pandemic, from the pandemic came to Norway until the end of this thesis, which is about halfway into 2021. The COVID-19 pandemic drastically changed many artists' work- and daily life. In times like these many of us have been given an opportunity to reflect. With the world being forced into more isolation and social distancing this thesis focus lies in attempting to investigate the more introspective effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had for Norwegian artists.

This study has based itself on mainly focusing on using two methods: literature research and semi-structured interviewing. For the interviews, there was four artists that was interviewed where the aim of the interviews was to get a better understanding of these artists daily and working life's during the pandemic. Artists in the music industry have reported to struggle with things such as psychological distress, so through this research it was especially interesting to investigate how artists were doing, taking the COVID-19 pandemic into account.

Through the literature research and the interviewing, the results reported that artists were experiencing more uncertainty and vulnerability, as well as being reported being more prone to psychological distress, during the pandemic. With this, it seems like the COVID-19 has increased pressure in artists daily and working lives. This master thesis only provided a perspective to my area of research, so further research is relevant in order to better understand the effects that COVID-19 pandemic has had on artists.

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# **1. Introduction**

With the COVID-19 pandemic being such a topic of discussion for the majority of my time whilst studying Music Business and Management at the University of Agder, it only felt natural to try to combine the two in some sort of way. The result of this ended up as this thesis with aiming to explore the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Norwegian artists. With this, topics such as how the artists perceived mental health, wellbeing and daily life in general, will be explored. In this master thesis we will also look into topics such as the artist's role in the music industry, pros and cons of being an artist during times like these, as well as some hopes or worries for the future.

## **1.1. Main Topic and Focus**

For this master thesis my main topic was Norwegian artists during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this thesis, my main focus is on the artists in the popular music industry. Merriam-Webster's online dictionary defines an artist as "*a person who creates art (such as painting, sculpture, music, or writing)*" and as "*a skilled performer*" (Merriam-Webster's online dictionary, n.d.). In context of this thesis, I am using the word "artist" as a definition of the people working with performing and creating music.

Through this research I aim to explore Norwegian artists' situation during the pandemic, with especially focusing in on the artists' perceived mental health and wellbeing. My goal overall is to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Norwegian artists.

In this thesis I aim to investigate the present, for example hearing from the artists I interview how they are doing in this current situation. I aim to learn a bit about the artist's role in the music industry, for example with getting a better understanding of how the artist-role and work life for artists have evolved. And lastly, I hope to figure some thoughts and attitudes towards the future.

## **1.2. Motivation and Relevancy**

I already knew when applying for my master's degree that I wanted to write my thesis about something having to do with the artists' perspective of things, because of my own personal background and interest in being an artist.

With the situation of the COVID-19-pandemic happening when I was studying to get my master's degree in Music Business and Management at the University of Agder, not only did it seem relevant, but almost natural, to research how this situation has affected things in the

music industry. With help from my supervisor, Daniel Nordgård, I figured out and narrowed in on what it was that I actually wanted to write about. The topic I ended up wanting to explore was “The Effects of COVID-19 on Norwegian Artists”. With having to spend more time inside and more time alone, it pushed this thesis in the direction of focusing more on the introspective part of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had. I found the perceived mental health and wellbeing of artists to be such an interesting topic, especially in times like these when it seems to be tested. When it seems like the music industry and its workers are being limited and put into desperate position is when it gets really interesting to be an observer and try to figure out the effects and outcomes of things.

I chose to write about this topic, not only because I found it interesting to get to comment on what is going on in the music industry and with its artists during the COVID-19 pandemic, but also, actually mostly, because learning and researching about artists’ perceived mental health and wellbeing during trying times like these were to give me a broader perspective of things if I ever were to find myself in a similar position myself. By not only trying to objectify and get an overview of the situation that many artists find themselves in, but also by sympathizing and trying to look through different eyes, I really felt like I have learnt something valuable to take along with me in my own journey. However, hopefully, this research can help other researchers, readers and music industry-workers to get a better understanding of the topic, and for future generations to look back upon how Norwegian artists were reported doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

### **1.3. Importance**

It goes without saying that artists have one of the most important roles within the music industry. They are the ones who create and perform the actual music. Researching, discussing and keeping up with artists’ wellbeing and perceived mental health is important in order to know how an important sector within the music industry is doing and to better understand how it is functioning. I would argue that the discussion of how the artists *actually* are doing is one that is necessary to have, especially seen in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

This thesis has given a few artists a platform to speak out on and share what they currently are going through. I believe that a lot of artists can relate to the experiences and thoughts that has been shared by these artists for this thesis. With this, I hope that this master thesis can open up a discussion around the artists’ role in the music industry and how they are doing.

## 1.4. Target Audience

The target audience for this master thesis is researchers, scholars and people who generally are trying to get a better grip of what is going on within the music industry, such as for example freelance artists and musicians. If this master thesis could help any other researchers out there with their research that would be such a compliment to this project.

## 1.5. Structure

This master thesis has mainly been divided into 8 chapters which have been divided between 4 parts. Part 1 of this master thesis is the *introduction* and is built up by chapter 1, 2 and 3.

This master thesis has been divided into mainly 8 chapters. The first chapter being the *why, how and what* of this master thesis, which is the chapter which you are currently reading. In chapter 2 I address the theoretical backdrop and previous research which have added value and relevance to this thesis. In chapter 3 I introduce the methodology which I have used to build my master thesis.

Part 2 of this thesis is about *findings*. This part is built up by chapter 4, 5 and 6. Chapter 4 focuses in on the interviews which have been conducted for this research. Chapter 5 addresses themes for this research. Whilst chapter 6 is about the interesting findings of this thesis.

Part 3 of this thesis is the *discussion*-part. Here, I will, for example, discuss and compare the findings which I have found through my literature research with the findings which I got from my interviews.

Lastly, there is the *conclusion*-part which concludes the master thesis.

The references which I present in this master thesis are presented in the APA 6<sup>th</sup> format, as the University of Agder suggests and prefers.



## 2. Theoretical Backdrop

### 2.1. Historical Context

To better be able to discuss how things are with artists today, it is important to consider the history and the journey of the music industry with its effect on artists. With a brief look into the journey of artists in the music industry we become better equipped to understand how things have come to be the way they are today. Therefore I am presenting you with a brief look into the history of the music industry.

#### 2.1.1. The Music Industry's Digital Age and the Effect of Digitization

According to John Watson, *change* has been a constant feature of the mainstream music industry. He explains that this change has almost always been driven by technology (Hughes, Evans, Morrow & Keith, 2016, p. 2). Keeping in mind the history and the future of the music industry it is possible to notice reoccurring themes such as newness and constant evolution. (Hughes et. al., 2016, p. 2). At this point in music history, however, the speed at which change is occurring, as well as the magnitude of change can be hard to keep up with.

Music production, distribution and consumption have all changed over the years, with this there has also been fundamental change happening to the music industry.

During the 1970s digital technologies were introduced in areas of music, such as for example in music production and in music recording. The introduction of these digital technologies started the music industry's journey into what we consider to be *the digital age*. The years thereafter were to be some of the most transformative years which the music industry was to experience thus far. (Wikström, 2018, p. 8).

In the 1980s, the use of digital technologies within the music industry expanded to take a part in music distribution. Thereafter, between the late 1990s and the early 2000s, one of the most important factors of driving the change of the music industry was with Internet technologies. This change ended up making all the parts of the music business into the realm of digital technology. (Wikström, 2018, p. 8).

Over the last decades, there is no doubt whether or not the music industry has been disrupted by digital innovations – it truly has. In Peter Tschmuck's book "The Economics of Music" he talks about the *digitization* of the music industry. In this book he explains that digitization did not just change the way that music is distributed, but it has also fundamentally reshaped the

music business itself. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 182). As a result of digitization, Patrik Wikström explains that music no longer is “*something that mainstream audiences own and collect,*” but rather that music has been transformed from a physical product to be a part of what he explains to be “the Cloud” (Wikström, 2018, p. 4).

The digitization of the music industry has introduced the music industry to new potentials, that goes beyond the old and usual process of selling. Peter Tschmuck argues that these potentials has led artists to becoming “*less dependent on the traditional structure of the music business,*” (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 183). In today’s music industry, for example, it is common for artists to post content such as music videos, announcement and such to Internet-platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 183). With this, Peter Tschmuck also explains that digitization has lowered the music entrance barrier of the music business. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191).

Along with digitalization there has been opened up for new possibilities to use different platforms, such as YouTube and Facebook, to use them as a sort of direct communication between artists and fans. Another opportunity which digitalization has opened up for is the opportunity for artist to be able to distribute their music directly through the Internet. With different digital services artists in this time of history have been given the opportunity to be able to control almost all the aspects of different areas of music, such as music production, distribution and music marketing (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 183).

An article from 2004 in Billboard Magazine explains that the implementation of new technology seems to be making the music industry an even more competitive field. And the article states that “*Charles Darwin would be proud,*” because “*Today’s harsh music climate is certainly putting his survival-of-the-fittest theory to the test,*” (Billboard Magazine, 2004). This article from Billboard Magazine further explains that “*artists are increasingly being forced to pursue new avenues of income that go beyond recording deals, as the traditional business model for artist/label deals evolves,*” (Billboard Magazine, 2004). With this Billboard Magazine wrote that observers predict that this could likely result in music companies signing fewer recording and publishing deals, lower sales expectations and reducing their staff as to be a part of this. (Billboard Magazine, 2004). It seems like the predictions that Billboard made in their article has come true – with for example artists still being forced to pursue new untraditional avenues of income and with music companies signing fewer recording and publishing deals in 2021.

With the Internet, music then was able to be recorded and distributed cheaper than ever before and therefore a lot of observers of the music industry argue that the intermediary role played by the record companies may become no longer necessary in the future. (Billboard Magazine, 2004).

There are also critics who are not this quick to try and predict the end of the record industry. Some critics note that the uncertainty which exists within the music industry stems as a result of the major record companies attempting to have control over the start-up models for distributing music digitally at the expense of the artists and music consumers. Billboard Magazine points out that attempts like these from the record companies “*have resulted in a disparate and daunting mix of digital music business models,*” (Billboard Magazine, 2004). The article from Billboard Magazine argues that if the artists and record companies were to come together and work together towards a more of a collaborative business model, then the music industry’s chance of surviving as an industry may be bigger. The article then states that “*the music industry’s demise may turn out to be no more than a greatly exaggerated rumor,*” (Billboard Magazine, 2004).

## **2.2. The Artist Centered Music Industry**

In the current music industry artists seem to have moved into the center of the music business. This centering of the artist came along as an effect of digitization and with it came a need for artists to get increasing expertise in how the music business functions and in self-management (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 186). However, self-management does not just require artists to have knowledge of the music business rules and practices, but it is also very time-consuming. If an artist is able to afford it, they might be able to get support from a professional management. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 186).

In the twenty-first century music industry it seems to be increased opportunities for artists to collaborate, and also to communicate, with others who are interested in their music (Hughes, Evans, Morrow & Keith, 2016, p. 1-2). With this though, there has been introduced new challenges for artists, as well as new terrains which artists are being forced to learn to be able to navigate. There are different aspects of the so-called *new music industry*, such as for example digital aggregators, social media and online streaming sites, for artists nowadays to consider today as part of their career. (Hughes, et. al., 2016, p. 2).

Peter Tschmuck explains in his book, *The Economics of Music*, that “*The artist is now in centre of the value-added network*” (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191). Further he explains that “*the artist has the power to decide who to collaborate with,*” and that there seems to be “*no need*

*for artists to give away all their copyrights and enter into exclusive contracts.*” (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191). In the article, “Assessing Music Streaming and Industry Disruptions”, Daniel Nordgård provides us with a different perspective. Here, Daniel Nordgård explains that even though there has been given quiet some optimistic views on the digital developments in the music industry that has come along with digitization – many of these optimistic views has been brought because of the expectations that digitalization will improve both the economic and the creative freedom for the smaller, independent stakeholders within the music industry, and doing so at the expense of the more major, incumbent companies within the industry. (Nordgård, 2017, p. 139-140). However, Daniel Nordgård explains that when looking into the recorded music market, the economic developments seem to be going in the exact opposite direction of what you would assume with having an optimistic view on the effect of digitization of the music industry (Nordgård, 2017, p. 145). He suggests that that it seems like either *“the expected effects of market alterations and/or substituting effects on the record companies must be somewhat delayed or that the theoretical frameworks deployed must be somewhat delayed”* or he suggest that *“the theoretical frameworks deployed must be somewhat inadequate in assessing the digital change on the music industries.”* (Nordgård, 2017, p. 145).

Another aspect that Daniel Nordgård provides in his article is that in today’s music industry artists have basically been forced into adopting several roles and functions which formerly in the music industry was undertaken by more professional music partners. Daniel Nordgård explains in his article that even though things such as increasing amateurism comes with its possibilities, he also notes that *“it’s difficult to perform these functions with so little economic certainty and reward,”* (Nordgård, 2017, p. 156).

### **2.2.1. The Artists’ New Responsibilities**

Daniel Nordgård pulls forward, in his research paper, an example of a new responsibility which have been handed over to the artist. Daniel Nordgård explains that *“while a central function for the record labels can be found in its role in distributing and disseminating recorded music, an equally important function has traditionally been to provide risk capital and investments in album releases and the marketing of music and artists,”* (Nordgård, 2017, p. 145). Daniel Nordgård further explains that also work such as *“music production, distribution and marketing are still considerable cost,”* that earlier used to traditionally be mainly the record companies task to take care of and to take the main responsibility with the economic risks that are involved in areas like these. However now this task is just another of

many which a lot of artists are expected to deal with. (Nordgård, 2017, p. 145). In other words, Daniel Nordgård explains that one of the record labels' earlier important tasks – which is risk taking - have now been handed over to the artists of the music industry.

Some of the other earlier functions of the record companies was also to provide its artists with administrative support, accounting and legal advice. In many cases the record companies also were expected to be able to provide creative and artistic support and input for the artists, with people for example working within A&R (Artist and Repertoire). (Nordgård, 2017, p. 145).

Daniel Nordgård explains that there are several specialized tasks, like these, which previously have been performed by various partners within the music industries that now seems to have been handed over to the artists (Nordgård, 2017, p. 145).

With these responsibilities handed over to many of today's artists, such as dealing with the financial risks and overall trying to figure out how to navigate through the music industry, it is possible to argue that many artists have become mostly reliant on themselves, at least in the beginning of their careers before they can afford to employ anyone. With this it is possible to argue that artists today are now expected to be able to run their own careers, as well as being able to build their own teams in the process. Simultaneously, it seems that the major record labels have started to become more and more passive over the years with signing and investing in new artists. With this then, it seems that the major record labels are leaning back and observing to see which artists that are demonstrating themselves to be worthy to invest in. This, then, with new and more expectations and responsibilities depending on the artist, results in heightened pressure for the artists that are trying to navigate themselves through and within today's music industry.

### **2.3. The Economic Aspect of Today's Music Industry**

Streaming has become one of the most attractive ways to consume music nowadays. Peter Tschmuck compares streaming today with the radio of the twenty-first century. He states that *"it's business model does not seem to be profitable and sustainable,"* (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192). According to Tschmuck, losses have increased year after year because of high licensing fees and the revenue cost of streaming providers is considered to be comparably high. Whilst this is happening, the music streaming services which mainly is operated by internet giants, such as Apple and Google, are in a more secure and comfortable position platforms, such as for example Spotify. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192)

The prophecy of the disintermediation of the music business is yet to come true, though. Peter Tschmuck explains that even though sectors in the music industry, such as the recorded music companies and music publishers, have managed to have lost some of their recent control in areas such as in production and distribution of music, these intermediaries still have managed to be able to exploit their massive back catalogues to digital music service providers, (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191) such as for example with Spotify.

The major record companies invested into streaming services, such as Spotify and Deezer. With this, the majors are expecting to monetize from their participation in the music streaming services. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192). With this, there has been established new music business models (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191). Then, with rights, such as copyright and related rights, intermediaries, such as the recorded music companies and the music publishers, have been able to gatekeep access to music by having the ability to control, and in some cases, even owning the music streaming services (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191).

Peter Tschmuck explains that the recorded music companies also seem to have found a way to outsource former key roles, such as the A&R-role, record manufacturing and music distribution, whilst focusing on being able to exploit master rights (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191). Peter Tschmuck points out that the music publisher in the music industry have expanded their repertoire by having acquired copyrights to entire music catalogues. In many cases it also seems like music publishers have entered the recording business with providing management services. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191).

In addition to this, Peter Tschmuck explains that the live music business seems to have become dominated by only a few concert promoters, such as the company Live Nation. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 191-192). Companies like Live Nation got their power through owning a large part of concert sites, ticketing services and agencies (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192). As a result of this, it is possible to see that the publishing sector, the recording sector and the live business sector of the music industry is converging into what seems to be heading towards, what Peter Tschmuck describes to be; *“a single music industry support network for artists”* (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192).

At the same time as this is happening in the music industry, big companies, such as for example Apple and Google, along with some telecommunications and internet service providers have been stepping into the music industry. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192). Peter Tschmuck explains that companies like these have managed to establish a new business model of digital music distribution. This new business model main focus is on being able to provide access to music, at anywhere at any time, as long as the consumer has an available

Internet connection, rather than for example trying to sell phonograms. The new big companies stepping into the music business seems to be using music to help sell other services. An example of this is Apple using music to help sell their electronic devices. Whilst for example Google is using music to better sell micro-advertisement. Since companies like these' music distribution does not need to break even, these big companies have a comparative advantage in the music business, compared to the music business' already established firms. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192).

Peter Tschmuck explains that in the paradigm shift, it seems that music has turned into a by-product of other business models. There is a possibility for internet-related companies to acquire the recorded music majors and with this getting to avoid paying "excessive" licensing fees in order to use music catalogues. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 192).

Peter Tschmuck explains that according to empirical data, the rise of music streaming means that income for artists has become so low that even superstars are unable to afford to live just by earning money on streaming payouts alone. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 193). This does not mean that music streaming is not an important tool within the music industry, but rather, as Peter Tschmuck suggests, that it might be more of use as a promotional tool to be used in order to connect fans and to attract attention. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 193).

Seen from the perspective of an artists, Peter Tschmuck explains that music streaming should be seen as "*just an additional income source alongside concert ticket sales, teaching, synch rights exploitation and diminishing CD sales,*" (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 193). Since the environment which artists' today have been put into makes the artist depended on having more skills than to just to be able to make music at a high technical level, artists also have to learn and be aware of how the music industry work, with for example understanding the underlying economic principle working in the music business. Peter Tschmuck writes that providing knowledge and skills like this for new entrepreneurs is the music educational studies' responsibility. Peter Tschmuck explains that he hopes that with his book, "The Economics of Music" can be contributed to this challenging task (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 193).

### **2.3.1. Decreased Costs in Making Music?**

According to Patrik Wikström, the "*changed nature of the music producer's profession along with the change in the structure of the music production system are important aspect of making music in the Cloud,*" (Wikström, 2018, p. 130). The average costs of producing a recording have decreased as a result of modern recording technologies and practices.

(Wikström, 2018, p. 130). However, the cost today of getting attention has increased. Patrik Wikström explained that the marketing budget for an album project in a music firm is typically set as a percentage of expected sales. (Wikström, 2018, p. 130). The real size of the marketing budget, however, exhibits an interesting dynamic as a result of the market's dependence on album sales, according to Wikström. The increase in album sales during the 1990s after a couple of years later rather drastically switched. During the early 2000s, the sale of recorded music sank rapidly simultaneously together with marketing budgets. (Wikström, 2018, p. 130). To conclude here, even though the price might have gone down on actually producing and releasing music, it seems that music is becoming increasingly harder to market, and to get anyone to notice and actually listening to the music which artists are making has with this also become increasingly difficult.

## **2.4. Geography's Effect on Music Production**

Patrik Wikström explains in his book that *"When the music business is in the cloud, the production of music is almost entirely disconnected from the physical geography,"* (Wikström, 2018, p. 128). The development of new tools within music recording seems, according to Patrik Wikström, to have driven major recording studios out of business (Wikström, 2018, p. 128). Wikström explains that music producers no longer were dependent on having to pay expensive rent to be able to get access to recording facilities, but now rather were able to *"make high-recordings in their own homes with the help of a laptop computer and a couple of decent condenser microphones,"* (Wikström, 2018, p. 128). Then, along with the Internet, it became possible for artists, musicians and technicians to work together on music whilst being located in completely different places in the world. A producer in Norway could now for example be able to create an instrumental track and send the track to a British artist who would record the vocals for the track before sending it to a Canadian guitar-player that could add a guitar-solo before the track was sent back to producer again for editing. In other words: distance became less of an issue for people working within the music industry looking to collaborate.

However though, distance still plays such a detrimental part on whether or not someone is actually able to have a career within music. Wikström, explains that even though it could be seen as *"possible"* to be able *"to sustain a living as an expert in some area and live geographically disconnected from your fellow co-workers,"* (Wikström, 2018, p. 128-129), research has shown that geography still matters. Also, the established geographical nodes



which exists in the music world are most likely to still play quite an important role for the music industry, also in the future. (Wikström, 2018, p. 129).

Michael Porter discussed how geographical factors affect company performance in a number of significant publications, such as in his book “Clusters and the new economics of competition” from 1998. In this book Michael E. Porter work to explain how success of companies often are influenced by these companies’ geographical conditions. Here, Michael E. Porter for example claim that; *“Paradoxically, the enduring competitive advantages in a global economy lie increasingly in local things – knowledge, relationships and motivation that distant rivals cannot match,”* (Porter, 1998, p. 77). It is safe to say that claims like this have been challenged during the COVID-19 pandemic. With musician and other music industry-workers being forced into isolation by the government, one could argue that with being forced to work away from most of their peers, musicians still managed to get work done, with for example introducing virtual concerts. However, seen from another point of view, one could argue that many music industry workers now are desperate not being able to take full advantage of tools that are necessary in a music career such as other people’s *knowledge*, their *relationship* with other people and the *motivation* which artists for example get by having physically live concerts where they are able to meet fans or talk to fellow musicians and music industry-workers.

Hallencreutz and Power are two authors that have been influenced by Michael E. Porter’s writing and has used Porter’s thinking about regions as dynamic systems to analyze the copyright and cultural industries, such as the Nordic music industries (Wikström, 2018, p. 129). Even though music recording might have become more or less detached from the idea of geography, Hallencreutz and Power demonstrate that physical proximity still is a relevant factor. Patrik Wikström gives an explanation for why you could argue for geography having a remained importance in the music industry is because of the fact that *“recording is merely one part of the overall musical experience,”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 129).

Patrik Wikström states in his book, The Music Industry, from 2018, that *“Live music is perhaps even more important to the growth and sustainment of a musical cluster than recorded music and live music remains as a non-digitizable real-world phenomenon.”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 129).

Patrik Wikström further states that *“Music is an inherently communal experience, not only on stage, but also during practicing and learning. In order to grow as a musician, it is necessary to meet, play and interact with other musicians, something that preferably occurs in real life.”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 129-130.) This thinking has really been challenged in times of the

pandemic with factors such as social distancing and shutdowns of concerts and similar areas where before contributed to artists being able to meet, play and interact with other musicians and other music industry professionals. The pandemic has basically forced the music industry into doing things a bit differently, such as relying more on things such as home studios, live sessions streamed live through the internet and etc.

### **2.4.1. The Change of the Recording Studios**

How and where artists record their music has changed drastically over the last years.

Patrik Wikström explains that *“In the early days of recorded music, the studio was a vital and almost defining part of the record company, but independent recording studios and production companies began to emerge in parallel to the development of the music producer.”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 126). Patrik Wikström explains that with the *“physical characteristics and features of the studios had to provide excellent acoustics; the facilities had to be pleasant enough to ensure that artists were inspired or simply had somewhere to hang out while waiting for the next take; the recording equipment required major investments and continuous reinvestments in order to be up to date with the latest technological development.”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 126-127).

With this said, it was often quite expensive to run a professional recording studio in the earlier days (Wikström, 2018, p. 126) and that also of course meant that most artists were unable to afford to create their own professional music studio at home (Wikström, 2018, p. 127).

However, during the 1980s and the 1990s, this situation changed. With new digital-recording technologies the cost of tools and equipment for music recording was dramatically lowered. With this, things such as expensive mixing consoles, tape recorders and other tools which before was required for analogue recording to be replaced by digital equivalents which was able to be bought for about a fraction of the cost compared to the earlier analogue recording equipment. (Wikström, 2018, p. 127).

The development of recording equipment seems to continue to be developing even further. Patrik Wikström writes that in *“these days, most of the tools required to produce a professional recording are software-based and can fit into ordinary laptop computers. As a consequence, most artists and musicians can afford to create their own complete and professional recording studios in their own homes.”* Patrik Wikström further explains that because of this new competition from small digital studios has made life more difficult for many traditional studios. However, Wikström notices that there still seems to be a demand for some studio services. Wikström pulls forward an example with the studio Abbey Road

Studios in London. *“A combination of skilled engineers, first-rate facilities and a decent history has enabled Abbey Road Studios to remain relevant for recording not only large classical music orchestras, but also smaller popular music projects. A completely different studio strategy is to focus less on tools and facilities and more on providing a unique environment to stimulate the artists’ creativity,”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 127-128).

## **2.5. Artists’ Mental Health before COVID-19**

The pressure that has been put onto today’s artists some might argue that might be a big factor to why many of today’s artists seem to be struggling mentally. With so much expected from them, not only by themselves, but also by the people around them as well, makes it no big surprise that these expectations are taking their toll. In this part of my thesis, we are mainly looking into studies on research done on artists’ mental health which was done before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

### **2.5.1. Can Music Make You Sick?**

In the study “Can Music Make You Sick?” by Sally Anne Gross and Dr. George Musgrave, the two researchers explain that their findings suggested that even though artists were finding solace in the production of music, working in the music industry did in fact seem to make musicians sick and be affecting the artists’ mental health.

With this study done by Sally Anne Gross and Dr. George Musgrave, the two researchers were able to prove just how serious of a problem mental health is within the music industry. According to this study 68.5% out of 2,211 participants reported that they had experienced depression, whilst 71.1% out of these 2,211 participants admitted to having experienced panic attacks and/or high levels of anxiety. (Gross, S. A., & Musgrave, G., 2017, p. 5). Based on the results from this study, the musicians were 3 times more susceptible to depression than the average person.

The respondents of this research pointed to a variety of reasons which contributed to their levels of mental ill-health. The four reasons which stood out the most in this research was: *poor working conditions, lack of recognition, physical impacts* and the *issues of being a woman within the music industry*. Let us break down and explain the four themes which contributed to artists mental ill-health a little further. (Music Minds Matter, 2016).

### 1. *Poor working conditions.*

By talking about poor working conditions, Sally Ann and Dr. George Musgrave pulls forward examples of poor working conditions for artist such as anti-social working hours, exhaustion, the difficulty and uncertainty of being able to make a living from an artist career and also the problem artists were having with being able to plan their times and their futures. (Music Minds Matter, 2016).

### 2. *Lack of recognition.*

The lack of recognition which the artists felt for their work, as well as the welding of the artists' music and identities into the artists' sense of self is one of the major issues which Sally Ann and Dr. George Musgrave pulls forward. (Music Minds Matter, 2016).

### 3. *Physical impacts.*

With the physical impacts of having a musical career examples pulled forward of this could be for example be artists experiencing musculoskeletal disorders. (Music Minds Matter, 2016).

### 4. *Issues of being a woman within the music industry.*

Women in the music industry has been faced with, and is still being faced with, a variety of challenges. Women within the music industry are proven more prone to deal with challenges such as balancing work and family commitments, being met with sexist attitudes and even sexual harassment. (Music Minds Matter, 2016).

## **2.5.2. Psychological Distress Among Norwegian Artists**

The findings from several studies, such as the one done in the research article "Symptoms of anxiety and depression among Norwegian musicians compared to the general workforce" by Jonas Vaag, Johan Håkon Bjørngaard and Ottar Bjerkeset support the claim that "*psychological distress is highly prevalent among musicians, both generally and when compared to other demanding professions,*" (Vaag, Bjørngaard & Bjerkeset, 2016, p. 243). This research article also recognized similar issues such as the ones Sally Ann and Dr. George Musgrave pulls forward, such as for example being a woman in the music industry. The research article figured that when it came to sex differences in their study that the female musicians were reported to have a higher prevalence of psychological distress than the male musician participants were reported to have (Vaag, et al., 2016, p. 243). The

authors explain that with females having higher prevalence of psychological distress, it is *“in accordance with previous research on internalizing disorders such as anxiety and depression in the general population,”* (Vaag, et. al., 2016, p. 243).

A more recent article called “Demands and Resources Associated Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians”, which is a study by Jonas Vaag, Asbjørn L. Aalberg and Ingvild Saksvik-Lehouillier, explains that previous studies have indicated several health challenges among musicians. However, despite this, less is known about the effect of work-related and personal factors influencing musicians’ mental health (Aalberg, Saksvik-Lehouillier, & Vaag, 2019, p. 2). In this article the researchers’ objective was to look into the personal and work-related demands and resources which were associated with professional musicians’ psychological distress. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 2).

The results from the project concluded that there were both work-related factors and personal resources that was associated with psychological distress among musicians. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 2). The results showed that there were personal factors, such as levels of neuroticism and a sense of mastery, that was proven in this project to be related to psychological distress among musicians (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 2). In this project’s final statistical model, extraversion, openness to experience, conscientiousness, job demands and social support were all factors that contributed to musician’s level of psychological distress, but all to a lesser degree. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 2).

The authors of the article explain that *“Musicians are at risk of a broad range of adverse health outcomes, including musculoskeletal conditions, hearing conditions, and occupational distress, poor sleep, and mental health problems,”* (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3). They further explain that *“Epidemiological research has also increased mortality rates among popular musicians,”* (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3).

As explained in the article “Symptoms of anxiety and depression among Norwegian musicians compared to the general workforce” by Jonas Vaag, Johan Håkon Bjørngaard and Ottar Bjerkeset, there is reported to that there is a lot of musicians are struggling with sleep, and also with psychological distress, such as with anxiety and depression compared to the general workforce (Vaag, et. al., 2016, p. 243). The article “Demands and Resources Associated Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians” points out that *“Despite the growing amount of research indicating a variety of health challenges among musicians, less is known concerning the roles of work-related and personal factors associated with mental health within this occupation,”* (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3).

### **2.5.3. Work Environment's Effect on Musician's Mental Health**

The authors from the article “Demands and Resources Associated Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians” argue that “*Generally, research within occupational health has shown that characteristics of the psychosocial work environment are related to the individuals' mental health,*” (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 4).

Studies like the study “Popular Musicians Under Pressure”, which was done by the end of the 80s, by Cary L. Cooper and Geoffrey I. D. Wills, have helped to better address how artists' work life might be related to their mental health (Cooper & Wills, 1989). In this study Cooper and Wills performed in-depth interviews with 70 popular male musicians. This qualitative study was conducted in order to investigate the major sources of stress experienced by British professional popular musicians. The main sources of stress, which was identified from this study, were performance anxiety, public ignorance, low self-esteem, work overload and underload, career development worries, and relationships at work. (Cooper & Wills, 1989). Questionnaire scores from this study also revealed that there were high levels of both Neuroticism and Psychoticism among these popular musicians. (Cooper & Wills, 1989).

In the study “Specific demands and resources in the career of the Norwegian freelance musician” by Jonas Vaag, Fay Giæver and Ottar Bjerkeset, the study reports that musicians were struggling with having an unpredictable and unstructured life. The study reported that it was demanding for the musicians because it required them to be able to create structure and stability within a chaotic context. (Vaag, Giæver & Bjerkeset, 2014). Aalberg et. al., points out that having the ability to adjust to this sort of instability might relate to having the conscientiousness-personality trait. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 6).

According to the Big Five personality model, conscientiousness explains how individuals differ in planning, organizing and completing tasks. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3). Aalberg et. al. explains that conscientious musicians are likely to have valuable assets that make them better equipped to plan ahead and to better organize in their work settings, which often is perceived as unstable. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3-4). The study by Jonas Vaag, Fay Giæver and Ottar Bjerkeset reports that having a high level of conscientiousness predicted having work performance across different occupations and were negatively linked to psychological distress. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 4).

The study from Vaag, Giæver and Bjerkeset further on explains that it seems that support from the musicians' network, such as the musicians' family, their band/professional network and their audience, mixed with the musicians' personal resources, such as entrepreneurial skills, flexibility and internal locus of control, were essential in order to be able to manage their work as a musician. When it comes to terms of demands for the musicians, topics such as unpredictable futures, external pressures from the media, as well as pressures from audiences and other interests, and family-work imbalance were underlined in this study. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 6).

### **2.5.3.1. Work Vs. Non-Work Contexts**

Musicians' work life can certainly be considered as untraditional (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 13). It is not unusual for musicians' to having to experience irregular working hours and other factors which contribute working in the music industry to be experienced as unstructured. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 13). The researchers from "Demands and Resources Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians" that musicians can be considered a risk group for organizational factors seem to be related to several health measures. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 13).

During the Aalberg et. al.'s research, even musicians themselves pointed out that "*work and non-work are unfamiliar entities and musicians may find it difficult to separate the two terms,*" (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 14). The research article explains that when researching musicians and artists, there is an importance of including a broader spectrum of concepts in contexts other than in just work contexts. Further, the research article argues that "*the role of concepts within the home and leisure context is more central for musicians' work than traditional concepts like quantitative job demands,*" (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 14). With this, they pull out examples such as that by being able to perform and feeling good after work could be influenced by the level of social support by the musicians' family. The research article pulls out that a reason why support from the musicians' family has such a big impact on musicians' is because of the musician professions effect on the family, when it comes to terms like for example economic constraints or the musician being away from the family for a longer period of time because of for example touring. With this, the research article by Aalberg et al. states that the contextual characteristics of the work for musicians seem to affect the need for contextual characteristics in the musicians' home and leisure life. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 14)

## 2.5.4. Personality Traits Linked to Mental Health

The overall findings from the “Demands and Resources Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians”-study figured that both contextual and personal variables were contributing to Norwegian professional musicians’ psychological distress. The researchers of this study also noted that the most important contributors to psychological distress among musicians were neuroticism and low sense of mastery. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 15)

In this study by Aalberg et. al. the authors combined the Big Five (agreeableness, extraversion, neuroticism, conscientiousness, and openness or intellect) with a more thorough categorization of mental health problems. The combination of these two methods has resulted in new studies on the link between personality traits and mental health. A meta-analysis that analyzed mean levels of the Big Five personality domains across psychiatric diagnostic groups found that anxiety, depression, as well as substance use, were related with low degrees of conscientiousness and high levels of neuroticism. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3).

### 2.5.4.1. Neuroticism

The opposite of emotional stability is considered to be neuroticism. Neuroticism has been reported to be related to psychological distress. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 4).

In this research the authors figured that *neuroticism* and *low sense of mastery* were the strongest factors related to musicians’ psychological distress. Neuroticism can influence psychological distress in several ways. If viewed from a dispositional perspective, people with high neuroticism scores are more likely to experience distress and problematic life events. This then has the possibility to lead to even more mental health problems and then worsening the person’s mental health state. The close overlap between trait (personality) and state (mood) could be seen as another likely explanation for the strong link between neuroticism and psychological distress. Aalberg et. al therefor here recommend that prospective research to further investigate the temporal relationships between neuroticism and mental health in musicians. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 12).

In the study “Specific demands and resources in the career of the Norwegian freelance musician” the researchers pointed out that something which was of importance for freelance musician’s health was their personal flexibility and tolerance when it came to ambiguity. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 4). In the Big Five framework psychological flexibility is related to having emotional stability. *Psychological flexibility* as a concept refers to having the ability to



adapt to various circumstances and environments and to be able to adjust mindsets for coping in different situations and environments in life. Individuals who have high emotional stability have a tendency to a lower number of negative emotions as they also seem to handle stressful situations more efficiently than those with a higher number of negative emotions. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 4).

#### **2.5.4.2. Sense of Mastery**

The suggested that having psychological flexibility was related to having lower psychological distress. Having psychological flexibility suggested that you would be more equipped to have a more constructive adaption to your external and internal environments. Another aspect that might be important when discussing psychological distress is *sense of mastery*. Having a strong sense of mastery may help artists in developing the skills that they need in order to manage their careers. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 4).

According to the study “Demands and Resources Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians”, sense of mastery was negatively related to psychological distress among musicians (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 12). The study explained that the musicians’ in their study perceive control in salient areas of their lives to be linked to their mental health and be measured by their levels of psychological distress (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 12).

There are several ways in which sense of mastery can relate to psychological distress (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 12). Entrepreneurial abilities and traits may mediate the relationship between sense of mastery and psychological distress (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 12-13). Aalberg et. al. notes that internal locus of control is a core feature of entrepreneurial traits. This was also reported to be the case for Norwegian freelance musicians. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 13). The core characteristics of the sense of mastery concept are similar to those of the locus of control concept. A general sense of control over one’s life and the environment may help develop musicians’ artist career with business strategies and self-promotion. According to Aalberg et. al. a strong sense of mastery may help artists to become more successful within their occupation and in their lifestyle, resulting in less psychological distress. According to this type of thinking a strong sense of mastery may help developing musicians’ specific skills and abilities. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 13).

A study done researching education, sense of mastery and mental health figured that a sense of mastery was an important mediator in the relationship between education and psychological distress, with mastery accounting for majority of the relationship between the two. This led the authors to argue that in order to promote mental health among pupils the educational system should focus on targeting sense of mastery. (Dalgard, Mykletun, Rognerud, Johansen & Zahl, 2007). This notion is supported in the study “Demands and Resources Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians”. The researchers from “Demands and Resources Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians” explain that in their sample of highly educated musicians, they did not find that education was related to distress, but rather that through their findings, that by targeting sense of mastery in education and in music schools that this would be a valid solution in order to promote mental health. (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 13)

## **2.6. COVID-19 on the Norwegian Music Industry**

### **2.6.1. COVID-19 Going Global**

On March 11<sup>th</sup> in 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. (World Health Organization, 2020).

In 2020, COVID-19 seemed to seize control over the world, affecting country after country. Karen M. Staller explains in her article “Harnessing Covid-19 to celebrate qualitative social work: Research and practice” that the coronavirus “*brought with it disruption, uncertainty and suffering,*” and further explains that “*Our greatest defense against this tiny terror was reducing crowd size, keeping physically distant, wearing masks, and generally staying isolated.*” (Staller, 2021). These precautions came with their challenges of course. With reducing crowd sizes, keeping physically distant and staying generally isolated having a detrimental effect on for example the music industry’s live sector. Also, with the music industry experiencing uncertainty, disruptions and also suffering, hopefully, the music industry have been forced to have learned something from such a trying time. Karen M. Staller states in her article that because of the COVID-19-situation “*Improvisation became the name of the game,*” (Staller, 2021) and with the music industry-workers being forced to adapt with the live sector shutting down, not being able to meet their co-workers in person anymore and such, digital communication became the new normal. These trying times have once again proven the importance of an industry’s willingness to adapt. It seems that COVID-

19 sort of worked as a global stress test which ended up revealing a lot of weaknesses and gaps in several industries, such as the music industry. However, with the gaps and weaknesses that we have been shown during this global pandemic, there is hope for the future if we try to transform these difficult and trying times into an opportunity to see flaws that are in need of change. Challenges like these are not just meant to be overcome, but we are also meant to learn something from them to be better prepared for challenges we might face in the future.

### **2.6.2. COVID-19's Financial Impact on Norwegian Musicians**

The outbreak of COVID-19 resulted in an unprecedented level of financial anxiety for artists and other people working within the music scene. Some artists depend on their live events in order to be able to make their ends meet (Hu, 2020) and the cancelling of shows and festivals caused a drastic stop to this. The Arts Council Norway explains that most artists have several sources where they are earning their income. With this, there are a lot of artists whose income has been drastically reduced. On the 9<sup>th</sup> of November in 2021, Arts Council Norway reported that the loss of income for artists within the music industry was estimated to be around 180 000 NOK. (Kulturrådet, 2020).

#### **2.6.2.1. Virtual Concerts as a Substitute**

On the 12<sup>th</sup> of March in 2020 cultural events in Norway was banned (Pettersen, Helljesen, Svendsen & Hagen, 2020) in order to prevent spreading of the Coronavirus. Because of these new measures which was implemented by the government in Norway, it meant that majority of concerts, festivals and bigger gatherings was forced to be cancelled.

Because of the cancelling of concerts and festivals many music-workers found themselves in quite a pressed situation. To replace the cancelled concerts and festivals, virtual concerts came along as a temporary solution. A hypothesis here could be that there could become more of a focus on digital solutions for doing work in the music industry in the future, such as hosting virtual concerts, also after the live sector has gone back to normal. However, it is easy to argue that these virtual concerts just have not been able to replace regular physical live concerts. One reason for this might be because going to a concert for many people is about more than just being able to enjoy music, it is about having an *experience*. You could compare it to the difference between having a Skype-session with your friends versus physically having a party with them. Even though a digital session can be nice and a fun

temporary solution for not being able to meet in person, it just does not compare to being able to actually be in the same space together, having a collective experience.

With live performances seeming to be replaced by virtual concerts, in Norway, Facebook-pages, such as *Brakkesyke 2020*, were promoting virtual concerts from Norwegian musicians (Kleveland, 2020) to the public. Filip Roshauw together with a small group created the Facebook-page “Brakkesyke 2020”. (Tolfsen & Bjørneset, 2020). Filip Roshauw told NRK that he was aware that musicians, especially freelance musicians, has ended up in a very stressful situation because of the lockdown. (Tolfsen & Bjørneset, 2020). In a post on the Facebook-page the team behind Brakkesyke 2020 wrote in that they were not really interested in becoming concept makers, they just wanted to “*see, listen and share some music.*” (Brakkesyke 2020, 2020). However, thanks to initiatives like these, the live sector was kept alive, in some form. However, because of the restrictions the live sector was put under, these initiatives could only keep the live sector alive in some sense.

With not being able to see artists perform live any longer, people have been recommended to voluntarily send donations to artists in order to help artists out financially and to show their appreciation for the virtual concerts from these artists. With these, artists take to platforms such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitch to be able to livestream music performances. (Hu, 2020.) Donations to live streams can be sent through platforms such as Vipps or PayPal. Many of the artists which are choosing to live stream their concerts have included payment details to their virtual concerts, so that their audience have the opportunity to contribute financially. (Hu, 2020). However, it must be said that virtual shows do not provide a perfect financial substitute for artists who have lost their opportunity to tour and perform live. (Hu, 2020).

## **2.7. Copyright and COVID-19**

Copyright is one of the most central concepts standing within the music industry. According to the World Intellectual Property Organization copyright, also known as author’s right, covers the rights that creators have over their literary and their artistic works (World Intellectual Property Organization, n.d.) It is such a vital part of the music industry that Patrik Wikström even labels the music industry as a copyright industry (Wikström, 2018, p. 10). A simplified definition of copyright, by Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, defines copyright as “*the exclusive right to reproduce, publish, sell, or distribute the matter and form of*

*something (such as literary, musical, or artistic work)*” (Merriam-Webster’s online dictionary, 2020).

Copyright is such an essential part of the music industry and a lot of artists are making money and benefiting off of copyright. However, it is so rare that artists are able to make enough money to make ends meet and to live off of music just through copyright. Most artists also have to depend on other sources of income to be able to make their ends meet financially. With the music industry experiencing what can be considered to be a crisis in the live sector, the music industry’s artists are also experiencing a crisis. With the live sector basically being shut down an important income for a lot of music industry-workers has drastically changed.

## **2.8. Mental Health in the Music Industry during COVID-19**

In Session 17 from 2021’s Amplify Music Conference, Ace Piva, Angela Rose Whaley, Debbie Carroll, Eline Van Audenaerde and Sally Ann Gross looked into the mental health of the music industry.

Ace Piva describes mental health as *“a huge and complex area that runs from wellbeing to emotional distress to very challenging and often unknown psychological disorders and illnesses. Mental health includes both the emotional, psychological and social wellbeing,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 1:31). Some good news though, according to Ace Piva, is that mental health seem to be *“expanding both in terms of scientific research, different approaches to treatment and how the public views it and in the media,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 2:07) Ace Piva further explains that he finds it unsurprising that many people find themselves struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic, and further goes on to explain that it seems that the pandemic amplified issues which relate negatively to emotional distress (Amplify Music, 2021, 2:48). In the music world, research has shown how entangled professional and personal identities can be. With this Ace Piva explaining that the strain of the current situation is *“sadly clearly visible”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 3:15).

Vice President of MusiCares, Debbie Carroll explains that they recently had conducted a music and wellness survey. (Amplify Music, 2021, 10:08). In this survey it was reported that over 26 percent of the respondents noted to have higher propensity for depression and anxiety under the pandemic, as well as 62 percent of respondents reporting to have high levels of stress due to financial wellbeing (Amplify Music, 2021, 10:13). With this, Debbie Carroll, reports that MusiCares is *“seeing a variety or a large number of folks coming our way who*

*need mental health support*” (Amplify Music, 2021, 10:33). She further explains that there is a range of mental health support which is needed as she explains that it can range from general angst to anxiety about what’s next during the pandemic (Amplify Music, 2021, 10:39).

Angela Rose Whaley explains that as well as dealing with things like some collective trauma, survivor guilt, there has also been reported that some artists and musicians that have been dealing with feelings of guilt during the pandemic because they are not creating as much as they think they should. She argues that *“it’s okay if you haven’t been your most productive during a global pandemic, like that’s completely fine.”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 17:57).

Debbie Carroll notes that *“if we’re all honest with ourselves the pandemic has been a struggle emotionally for all of us, so also normalizing that and letting people know that you’re certainly not alone if you haven’t felt a 100 percent during the past year plus,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 11:21). Sally Ann Gross then explains that *“The overall levels of anxiety that were always there for precarious workers were absolutely turned upside down,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 12:09). However, she explains that one of those things who have been interesting to see in the UK has been that it seems like *“people in the music community have come together”* and that they actually have been forcing, what Sally Ann Gross describes as *“really interesting change working collectively across the music space”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 12:44). She further explains that she does not think that she does not think she has seen this sort of level of collective action in the music space before and describes this to have been *“really inspiring and actually making us feel like actually this is really hopeful,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 13:08). Sally Ann Gross further continues with explaining that in the UK they have had a government inquiry (Amplify Music, 2021, 13:25) where Sally Ann Gross notes that there has been put a pressure on the Government to support the arts during the pandemic. With this, Sally Ann Gross explains that this pressure on the Government has been truly important, and notes that *“actually acknowledging that people need support”* and that the *“idea that we are actually needing each other has become a very interesting byproduct of a very difficult time and I think that’s something that gives us all hope, so it gives me hope,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 13:33).

## **2.9. COVID-19 and the Music Industry's Future**

Mark Banks put it so elegantly when he explained the situation which many cultural workers have found themselves in during the pandemic with writing that “*A calendar of commitments has been thrown to the fire, with ordinary cultural workers – many self-employed or freelance, dependent and precarious – finding themselves among the most seriously burned,*” (Banks, 2020, p. 649). With this, Mark Banks explains that because of the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic many cultural workers who either are self-employed, does freelance, or who are dependent and precarious, are finding themselves among those who are struggling the most during this pandemic (Banks, 2020, p. 649). Mark Banks further explains that the consequences for cultural workers short-term might be disastrous, whilst the longer-term effects that the pandemic has had on cultural workers is yet to be known (Banks, 2020, p. 649).

### **3. Methodology**

The methodology of this master thesis is focused on my topic of research which in this thesis is about the more introspective effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has on Norwegian artists. This is an explorative study where the chosen methods have been picked because of being found the most fitting for my project. An important factor which needs to be taken into account and has dictated my chosen methodology for this project has been that project has needed to stay accomplishable within the set time period and with the resources which have been available to me as a master student. For this thesis, the plan was to accomplish my master project mainly using two methods: literature research and semi-structured interviewing.

#### **3.1. A Qualitative Approach**

The main approach which has been chosen to do this thesis is with a qualitative approach. A reason for choosing this approach is because a qualitative approach for this project could be considered as the most realistic this project, as well it being the approach that seemed to be the most suitable to research the topic of interest.

Martyn Denscombe states that *“The difference between qualitative and quantitative research does not technically lie in the use of the different methods, but rather in how we treat data differently with these two approaches”* (Denscombe, 2007, p. 247). Even though this master thesis is built up by both quantitative and qualitative data, the main approach of this master thesis is still qualitative.

Martyn Denscombe explains that whilst in quantitative research numbers can be used as the unit of analysis, in qualitative research words or images can be used as the unit of analysis (Denscombe, 2007, p. 248-250). Also, whilst quantitative research is often based on large-scale studies with specific focuses and predetermined research design with a certain high level of researcher detachment, the qualitative research is based on what Martyn Denscombe refers to as descriptive use of data collected from small-case studies with rather holistic focuses (Denscombe, 2007, p. 248-250). Denscombe explains that with the focuses that are used for qualitative research, that these areas of focus are often focused on emergent research design, as well as a certain degree of researcher development (Denscombe, 2007, p. 248-250).

Svend Brinkmann and Steinar Kvale explains that qualitative interviews *“works with words and not with numbers”* (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 15). This comment points to the main difference between doing qualitative and quantitative research, which is that whilst



quantitative studies often focus on *numbers* or some sort of statistical data, qualitative studies most often focus on *words* or similar. Since my main focus of gathering data will be through interviews and through literature research, my main unit of analysis will be described as rather *grammatical* rather than *numerical*. My research question is mainly exploring topics such as the perceived mental health and wellbeing of artists, therefore a qualitative approach is the most suitable to do since the research I planned to do mostly concerns itself with exploring a more subjective side of the music industry.

### **3.2. Literature Research**

The literature research which was done for this project is considered to be an essential part of writing my master thesis. As soon as the process of doing my master thesis began, I started off doing literature research. Reasoning for the research I have done for this master thesis is for example to find other point of views, strengthen theories and overall getting a better understanding of the topic that I have chosen to write about. By doing this, it was easier to be able to place my topic of interest into the academic field.

When starting to look for different material that could be used as part of my literature research, I started off by browsing for material at the digital library base, Oria, as well as using Google Scholar as a tool to help me find relevant literature which I could use for my thesis. Another tool that I have used to help find relevant literature was to look at the references that was provided in the relevant literature I read.

For doing this kind of research, not only has it been important to be critical to the literature which I have found, but it has also been helpful to be able to narrow down my topics and specifying which knowledge I was searching for. Overall, doing literature research was used as a process to help me to further understand my topic, as well as bringing me the basic knowledge surrounding my topic of interest.

#### **3.2.1. Previous research**

This thesis has been built up by previous research relevant for my topic. There seems to be a lot of existing research, both about topics such as the COVID-19 pandemic, research discussing artists' mental health and etc. Then, early on in the process, narrowing down and choosing which literature to focus on became a priority for the project. The main books which have been chosen for the theoretical backdrop for this master thesis was "Can Music Make You Sick?" by Sally Anne Gross and Dr. George Musgrave and "Demand and Resources

Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians” by Jonas Vaag, Johan Håkon Bjørngaard and Ottar Bjerkeset. Other sources such as “Assessing Music Streaming and Industry Disruptions” by Daniel Nordgård, “The Economics of Music” by Peter Tschmuck, “The Music Industry” by Patrik Wikström, (...) are also worth mentioning.

### **3.2.2. Doing Interviews by Steinar Kvale**

For this master thesis I used both the first edition of the book and the second edition of the book. “Doing Interviews” was a helpful tool during the interview-process that I am planning to do during my master project. The reason why I have found this book so relevant to help me build my master thesis is because this book was able to provide me with different theory and guidelines in order to build up and strengthen my thesis with, as well as being able to provide me with material such as guidelines, examples and overall tries to provide with conceptual frames for understanding research interviewing. The book “Doing Interviews” also focuses in on both epistemological and ethical issues that are often raised whilst doing qualitative research.

### **3.3. Semi-structured Interviewing**

For my master project I chose to do a qualitative research interview. This form of interview attempts to understand the world from the subjects’ point of view (Kvale, 2008, p. XVII). Semi-structured in-depth interviews, like the ones I am planning to do, open up the possibility to explore the informant’s perspectives and opinions. Semi-structured in-depth interviews has the possible advantage of the interview objects being able to share openly about their experiences and open up the possibility to explore the informant’s perspectives and opinions. Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann explains about *semi-structured life-world interview* which is a form of research interview in the second edition of the book “Doing Interviews”. This type of interview is defined in this book as “*an interview with the purpose of obtaining descriptions of the life world of the interviewee with respect to interpreting the meaning of the described phenomena,*” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 9). Brinkmann and Kvale explains that semi-structured life-world interviews “*attempts to understand themes of the lived daily world from the subjects’ own perceptives,*” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 14). They continue to explain that this type of interview is seeking to obtain descriptions from the interviewees’ “*lived world with the respect to interpretation of the meaning of the described phenomena,*” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 14).

### 3.3.1. The Interview Guide

Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkmann defines an interview as “*a professional interaction, which goes beyond the spontaneous exchange of views as in everyday questions, and becomes a careful questioning and listening approach with the purpose of obtaining thoroughly tested knowledge.*” (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2018, p. 9). With this quote Steinar Kvale and Svend Brinkman underline the importance of *listening* in an interview. With this thesis, I was able to learn much from just by being able to listen in on their thoughts and personal views on things. In the box on this page, you see the interview-guide which I used to conduct my interviews. With my interviews being semi-structured interviews, there was added some questions that felt natural to the conversation. This was done in order to deepen my own understanding of the answers and thoughts which the interviewees provided me with. My interview guide consisted of 16 questions split between 4 categories. These 4 categories were *Introduction and background* (1), *Daily life and work life* (2), *Motivation and worries* (3) and then I ended the interviews with *Wrapping up* (4).

#### Interview Guide

##### 1. Introduction and background

- 1.1. How are you?
- 1.2. Can you tell me a bit about your background as an artist?
- 1.3. What made you want to become an artist?

##### 2. Daily life and work life

- 2.1. How is it to be an artist now?
- 2.2. How is your current job situation? How do you work?
- 2.3. Do you have anyone you work together with? With whom?
- 2.4. Are you currently working on any fun projects?
- 2.5. Has the pandemic changed the way you work with music? How?

##### 3. Motivation and worries

- 3.1. As an artist - what worries you?
- 3.2. What keeps you going?
- 3.3. If earning money of music no longer were an option – what do you think you would be doing?
- 3.4. Do you see any negative or positive coming out of the pandemic?
- 2.10. What keeps you wanting to work in the music industry?
- 2.13. Do you have any thoughts about the future? Positive or negative?

##### 4. Wrapping up

- 4.1. Is there anything more you would like us to know about you, which you haven't been asked?
- 4.2. Is there anything you'd like to add or that you would like to end of this interview with?

### **3.3.2. Introduction of Interviewees**

Together with my supervisor, we agreed that the main group of interviewees to focus on would be between 3 to 5 artists. For this thesis I ended up with conducting 4 interviews with some artists that was found fitting for this thesis. The interview partners which I got to conduct interviews with was Billie Van, Marianne Engebretsen, Øyvind Blomstrøm and Simen Børven.

#### **Billie Van (Merete Pascual)**

Merete Pascual, that go under the artist-name Billie Van, released her debut album, “1 2 3 4 Radio Star” in 2013 and has since then been able to have music as her main source of income. Billie Van met Jonas Alaska and Michael Paskalev when studying at LIPA (Liverpool Institute of Performing Arts) from 2008-2011. This trio still works closely together to this day today, for example with their trio “Hollywood” and with their record label “Braveheart”.

#### **Marianne Engebretsen**

Marianne Engebretsen is a Norwegian artist, songwriter and producer. In 2015 Marianne Engebretsen was a contestant in the Norwegian version of the TV-show The Voice, where she made her way to the semifinal. She then later released her debut album, “Redefined” in 2017.

#### **Simen Børven**

Simen Børven is a Norwegian musician and the bass-player of the progressive rock-band Leprous, amongst other things. He describes himself having taken “*an institutionalized approach to music*” with him having studied el-bass at the University of Agder before taking a master’s degree in Music Business and Management. From there on, he says that he has been lead forward with “*natural steppingstones*” in his music career.

#### **Øyvind Blomstrøm**

Øyvind Blomstrøm is currently living in Oslo and working as a musician. He has experience from working with several Norwegian musicians, such as for example having been a part of the band “El Cuero”. Øyvind Blomstrøm runs his own podcast called “Kan du skru ned litt?” which is a podcast surrounding guitars, as well as currently using much of his time working on music with his band “Orions Belte”.

### 3.3.3. Conducting Interviews

Conducting interviews is one major approach to doing qualitative research (Kvale, 2008, p. 15). With this master thesis, I experienced firsthand how there is a lot of planning and documenting that is needed in the process of conducting an interview. In Steinar Kvale's book "Doing Interviews", he categorizes the steps of conducting interviewing as part of a research project, such as my master thesis, into "*the seven stages of an interview inquiry*". The seven stages he categorizes goes as followed:

1. Thematising
2. Designing the study
3. Interviewing
4. Transcribing the interviews
5. Analysing the interview material
6. Verifying
7. Reporting those findings

(Kvale, 2008, p. 35-36).

As Steinar Kvale makes us aware with this, is that there is a lot that goes into a process of conducting an interview. The actual interview-part, according to Steinar Kvale, is just one out of seven other parts of being able to conduct an interview.

For this master thesis, the interviews were held through Zoom. The interviews were scheduled to be between 30-45 minutes each. The Zoom-sessions were recorded using my computer.

With this, I saved both video and sound recording from the interviews. This made it simple to be able to go back and look at the interviews later in the process if needed.

Whilst recording my interviews, I also wrote down some notes. One major benefit of doing this was that it saved me a lot of time. It was also a good way to get an overview of what had been discussed and mentioned during the interviews. Another benefit of taking notes during the interviews were that I was able to collect my immediate thoughts and reflections from each interview.

### **3.3.4. Ethical Concerns and Challenges**

Before the process and during the process of writing my master thesis I was made aware of several ethical issues or challenges which I met. Even though, as Steinar Kvale explains, that “*Ethical issues go through the entire process of an interview investigation, and potential ethical concerns should be taken into consideration from the very start of an investigation and up to the final report,*” (Kvale, 2008, p. 24.) it does not mean that whilst doing a research project you should shy away from ethical concerns and challenges altogether, but rather that you should make yourself *aware* of these, and of course; pick your battles.

Ethical concerns and challenges are a part of the process of doing research projects, such as the research project I did for this master thesis. In the process of becoming aware and dealing with different types of ethical concerns and challenges, it becomes easier to either take different precautions towards them or to find ways to deal with them. Even though this master project took a couple of risks and dealt with several ethical concerns and challenges, I will reason taking these risks and dealing with them in order to elevate the level of this master thesis. Certain risks might not have been *necessary* for the project, but arguably, for the projects’ sake, they sure were *complementary*.

#### **3.3.4.1. Anonymity**

One of the main ethical challenges and concerns dealt with in this master thesis revolved around *anonymity*. Since I planned to only do interviews with a few relevant people within the music industry, their consent to having their name mentioned in my project was a priority for my master thesis. The reasoning for this is because since this thesis concerns itself with artists in the music industry, the master thesis would gain not only gain value, but also credibility by being allowed to use my interviewee’s names.

However, with this said, asking the artists which I interviewed to share vulnerable information with me as a researcher, like their perceived mental health and wellbeing, is a lot to ask of someone, especially since their names would be mentioned in this thesis. With this said, I am so grateful for the artists who have shared openly with me on this project and still allowed me to use their names. I believe making this decision, to reject the idea of keeping my interviewees anonymous, raised the level of my project.

### **3.3.4.2. Conflict of interest**

The social relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee has a central place in the meaning for what knowledge that will be produced during the interview research. This social relationship rests on the interviewer's ability to create a stage where the subjects feel safe enough to talk freely about private events which later can be used for by the interviewer as public use. For the interviewee to feel safe enough to talk of these private events it requires a balance between the interviewer's intention of pursuing interesting knowledge and ethical respect for the integrity of the interview subject. Here it is important to note that there is a conflict of interest with the tension which exists between knowledge and ethics (Kvale, 2007, p. 8).

### **3.4. Process**

Working on my master thesis was a process of constantly having to move back and forth and between what I wrote, the data which I collected, and so forth. At times, I felt stuck and lost in between the pages which I wrote. Also, the interview process happened much later than what I had first expected with my master thesis. However, a pro of this was that when I was able to do my interviews, I had a lot of more theory and facts for my topic than what I would have had earlier on in the process.

It was of great importance for me to see this project actually coming to a close. Structure and a relatively good work ethic mixed together with an interesting topic, which I actually felt motivated to write about, was what got me through this process. As suspected from the beginning, there was a great deal of work put into writing this thesis with varies degrees of motivation throughout the months, but in the end, it did come to a finish, as well as ending up becoming a product and a process which I am proud of having been through.

## 4. Findings

The aim for the interviews which was done for this master thesis was, overall, to get a general understanding of how the artists were experiencing their work and daily life during the COVID-19 pandemic. With the interviews conducted for this master thesis I got the opportunity to hear from some Norwegian artists themselves how they were doing. The interviews were conducted in Norwegian, so the all the quotations have been translated from Norwegian to English to the best of my ability.

In this interview-process I talked to 4 artists; Billie Van, Marianne Engebretsen, Simen Børven and Øyvind Blomstrøm. These artists provided this thesis with insights to how artists were functioning and doing work during the pandemic.

### 4.1. Making Plans and Routines

All the interviewees stated that they enjoyed their work as artists, but that they also experienced their profession to be quite mentally demanding. Since most artists and musicians are self-employed, this means that artists are having to be their own bosses – and with being in charge of their own careers, this then also naturally comes with its responsibilities and pressures. The interviewees interviewed for this thesis reported that they had made their own routines during the COVID-19 pandemic in order to try to function their best and to get the most out of their work during such a restricted time.

Most of the artists recognized themselves trying to make a certain structure during a time which can be perceived as unstructured and uncertain. This they did, with for example having focused on building themselves a steady work schedule. The artists expressed that a key thing for them, which has kept them motivated in their work during the pandemic, has been to treat their working hours with music such as others would treat their working hours in a regular job. For example, Billie Van explains that a normal day for her would be to deliver her kid at the kindergarten before heading off to work where she would stay until she picks up her kid from kindergarten again. Many of the artist interviewed for this thesis had focused on making themselves a routine and made it a priority, as Øyvind Blomstrøm explains, to be “*going to work and being as productive as possible.*”



Several of the other artists interviewed for this thesis also expressed gratitude towards having workspaces outside of their homes that they were able to go to. For example, Billie Van explains that she goes to her studio right down the street from where she lives, whilst for example Øyvind Blomstrøm explained going to a rehearsal room for work.

Last Autumn, Marianne Engebretsen began to really focus in on making a plan for her career going forward. She explains that she begun making a 2-year plan before starting to make a 5-year plan for her artist-career. She explains doing this in order to “*make a longer strategy*” for her career in music. Marianne Engebretsen explains that she finds it very motivating to have a something specific to work on or reach for, which making this plan has helped her with. She also explains that in such an uncertain time this was an important thing for her to do, not just for her career’s sake, but also for her own sake, to get a better overview. Still though she acknowledges that “*the near future is impossible to plan*”.

From hearing from the interviewees, it almost seems as though there is more of a focus on having a steady routine because of the artists’ awareness of how easy it can be during a time like this to be losing motivation and become passive in their work. Billie Van, for example, explains that “*I have this drive.*” She explains that she likes to wake up early in the morning, knowing that she will accomplish something that day.

With this, it seems that when the artists no longer were able to focus on certain things, such as touring or performing, they all still seem to have kept up their inner drive and focus on productivity. Even though some of their tasks during the pandemic have naturally changed, they switched their focus onto things they actually could get done, such as focusing in on recording and planning.

## **4.2. Postponed**

Øyvind Blomstrøm explained during his interview that his band, Orions Belte, released a new album on the 9<sup>th</sup> of April this year. However, Øyvind Blomstrøm noted that the release of the album was postponed two times before this. With the release of this album, Orions Belte were planning to have between 8-10 concerts in the month of April. However though, Øyvind Blomstrøm explained that they had to postpone the concerts they were planning to do in April to the summer because of restrictions caused by the pandemic. Still though, he is not sure if

the band will be able to perform in summer or if these concerts will end up getting postponed once again.

Øyvind Blomstrøm further explained that he worries for artists' "spirit" because of all the postponing and moving around in many artists' plans. He explains that before concerts and shows, many artists oftentimes either feel anxious or excited looking forward to the events they have committed themselves to. This anxiety or excitement takes a lot of mental energy from the artists either way. Then, when events end up being cancelled or postponed a lot of mental energy is spent on basically nothing. Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that it is clear that because of all the cancelling and postponing that some musicians are losing motivation or feeling frustrated when they are looking forward to and preparing for projects that ends up not happening.

#### **4.2.1. Worries of Crashing**

Øyvind Blomstrøm explains during his interview that currently the plan is to play the postponed concerts when society starts opening up again. He explains that, if possible, this summer will consist of doing gigs that were booked from last year but has ended up being postponed. He further explains that this most likely will end up in some crashes. Øyvind Blomstrøm explain that *"Since plans and dates have been changed and moved around so much, suddenly you have committed yourself to plans and projects that ends up crashing."*

Billie Van describes a different kind of crashing that may end up happening when more restrictions are lifted. She explains that some artists may risk to possibly be releasing music and going on tour at the same time. She explains that before the pandemic, she would kind of check around who was planning to, for example, be releasing music at the same time that she was. With this she was able to avoid dates crashing between her and her peers. However, now she explains that since artists have been starved from, for example, going on tour and marketing their music live, that a lot of tours and shows might end up feeling like they are happening all at once. With this, she predicts that after the pandemic there will be even more competition between artists, maybe especially seen in the context of live music.

#### **4.3. Keeping Active**

Some of the interviewees explained that because they do not have the same possibility anymore to market their music, they have switched their focus onto for example using digital

tools such as social media to keep up their activity. When it comes to keeping active, Marianne Engebretsen, comments that she currently does not really “*see any effect of releasing music when it comes to the economically aspects or booking demand, except for the response you are able to see on Instagram and such.*”

Øyvind Blomstrøm also explains that with Orions Belte’s new album, Villa Amorini, that they try to focus on keeping active on social media. The guitarist explains that he spends his days trying to work as much as he can with music by himself, as well as staying home, doing things around the house and etc. He explains that he thinks it is important to stay active, in any way that you can during this time, such as keeping physical active, working on yourself or working on your hobbies.

Simen Børven seems to have the same mindset as Øyvind Blomstrøm. Simen Børven explains that a lot has changed in the way that he usually works with music as he explains that he has spent some of his quarantine doing “*alternative activity*”. With this, he for example explains that he has been playing several streaming concerts, such as for example along with his band Leprous. He says he is curious to see what happens in the future with certain alternative activities, such as streaming concerts. Simen Børven also explains that Leprous started recording their new album, right after coming home from tour in the beginning of March 2020, they started working on their new album during lockdown also in March. He considers it important for artists keep active and states that «*You need to have something to do – you cannot just sit around and wither.*”

#### **4.4. Missing Performing and Touring**

The interviewees for this thesis all mentioned touring in some shape or form.

Øyvind Blomstrøm mentioned that he felt fortunate to have been working with people who had been able to hold some concerts during the pandemic, even though it had been in small formats. He stated during his interview that for him, “*personally, it doesn’t really matter that much whether it’s 5 or 5000 people in the audience.*” He further recognizes that “*It might not be the best for the business-side of things,*” but reasons this with that music for him “*is so much about being able to actually play and to perform music.*”

Whilst Billie Van stated in her interview that when she no longer was able to go touring, she felt like she “*might as well be working 50% in an office job for a record company or something in an administrative position of some kind,*” because, personally, touring was one of her favorite things to be doing as an artist.

## 4.5. Vulnerable Position

Billie Van explains that with the pandemic, she has really been made aware of how vulnerable her profession is. She explains that this has got her considering to maybe try combining her music profession with something else. She explains that whether or not you are able to make a living off of something that you yourself make, depends so much on whether things are going great or not. She notes that *“It is really fun when things are going great, but it can get really scary when things are going not so great.”* Simen Børven says something similar; that an artist career, such as his, is made up by *“a lot of choices that has leads to wins and losses along the way.”*

Øyvind Blomstrøm states that *“It is really though being an artist now.”* He explains that with him things are fine, but that he acknowledges experiencing, for example, lack of inspiration and motivation to do stuff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ever since he was a young boy Øyvind Blomstrøm knew that he would be doing music. He says that he still cannot imagine living a life without music. He explained that for him, personally, *“doing music feels kind of important,”* and notes that somehow it does not feel like there is something else that he should be spending his time on doing because music is what he knows and what he enjoys. However, with this, Øyvind Blomstrøm reveals that there has been no other time where he has thought so much about getting some kind of other form of education than now during the pandemic.

### 4.5.1. Social Aspect

Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that *“as a musician, you really notice how vulnerable our working environment is, especially because some musicians kind of base their social life around the music.”* With this, he further explains that when you go touring and you go playing, you are naturally working with and meeting people. However, when things like the opportunity to do this is taken away, a big part of some musicians’ social network may feel sort of stripped away from them.

Billie Van explains that a part of the process of finishing an album for her often includes having meetings, jams and sessions with people and that this process consists much of just being able to *“talk with people about music”*. She explains that with the pandemic that this task has been difficult to proceed. She explains that, for her sake, for example having a Zoom-

jam does not function as properly as having a normal in-person jam session. Therefore she has prioritized doing other things during the pandemic, such as songwriting and admin-work, as she is able to do these tasks more on her own.

Billie Van notes that a lot of artists and musicians have been reported struggling during the pandemic as she explains that something positive that may have come out of the pandemic is that she feels that “*We became a much more united bunch – all of us artists and musicians,*” and that there is “*kind of a comfort in not feeling like you are the only one who is not out playing.*”

#### **4.6. Fall Outs and Frustration**

The musicians who I interviewed for this thesis considered themselves fortunate to actually having had work to do during this pandemic. Øyvind Blomstrøm, for example, explains that he feels fortunate to have been working with people who has been able to hold some concerts, even though it has been in small formats. He further explains that he is worried for the “spirits” of artists. With this, he explains that he can tell that there are a lot of musicians who feel discouraged and hopeless. He says that he has seen several musicians expressing frustration over how things have been handled when it comes to subjects such as the Norwegian music money stream, how the Norwegian government have handled things and most importantly the feeling of constant uncertainty. With this he notes that “*Mental health is like this really big thing that we haven’t been able to see the outcome of yet in the pandemic.*”

Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that he believes that many working within the music industry will fall out. He explains that he already knows musicians and music industry workers that have found themselves other jobs. Simen Børven also mentions that he knows of several other musicians which either have found themselves another job or have went back to school. The interviewees also mention that they worry for other sectors of the music industry, such as the technicians and people who work with exporting culture within the music industry. With this, Øyvind Blomstrøm explain that that music industry-workers, such as artist, might find some way that they are be able to work, with for example spending their time more on working in the studio, songwriting and etc., however, sectors within the music industry such as technicians have not really had the same opportunity to be able to adapt their work as artists have in this situation.

## 4.7. Exploring Other Choices

Simen Børven explains that a possible factor for people seemingly being pushed out of working in the music industry being that “*culture is a surplus in society and with that it is one of the first thing that goes.*” Simen Børven explains that he sometimes could wish that he had another profession, at least on the side of music. He reveals that he has thought about maybe going to school to get an PHD, and also that he has been researching to see if there are any flexible positions within music which could still allow him to go on tour and such.

Nevertheless, Simen Børven also recognizes that the «the grass is greener on the other side»-mentality is one that frequently can appear in any profession, no matter which. He explains that «*I guess you just have to be smart enough to remind yourself why you are doing what you are doing.*” Simen Børven says that he is curious to see how many artists that find themselves another profession during the pandemic and how many artists that will choose to remain passive until there are more restrictions being lifted.

During our interview, Marianne Engebretsen explains that she is currently working 50% as a high school teacher in music. She explains that this position has been kind of essential for her to be able to make a stable income and is grateful, especially seen in the context of the pandemic, that she has had this profession. Marianne Engebretsen can be considered to be one of those who have been able to combine a somewhat more “regular” profession along with still having music as an essential part of it.

Billie Van explains in her interview that “*During the pandemic, I have understood just how vulnerable my profession really is.*” She explains that in her record label, Braveheart, she is the one doing the admin-work. Billie Van says that she truly enjoys her tasks with the admin-work that she does for Braveheart. She notes that whilst most people may think that office-work is boring, she notes that “*personally, it kind of gives me energy*». Billie Van explains that it could have been great to work somewhere where she would earn more of a steady income from something she enjoys doing, such as for example working as an admin in some record company or something similar like that. She also reveals that she has been looking at some other jobs, and that she for example will be working for the culture- and music-festival Miniøya that will take place this summer. Billie Van explains that she feels that “*Music is my field. It is kind of what I know,*” and explains that if she somehow were forced to give up music entirely «*then I think I would have lost a piece of my heart.*”

Different than Billie Van, Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that he thinks that if he had to focus on something other than music, that he would maybe not reach for working within the music industry. Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that he does not know what he would be doing if it were not music, but lately is the first time he has been really thinking it through. He has looked into options of other career-paths and explains that if he had been forced into getting another job than working with music, he believes that he would do something that maybe has nothing to do with music. Øyvind Blomstrøm has tested out working some different ways in the music industry, such as with for example having experienced working as a booking agent, but with this he found out that he would much rather actually be the artist on stage.

#### **4.8. Uncertainty**

Billie Van explains that she, especially now during the pandemic, has been feeling that the career of being an artist is very uncertain, especially considering for the long run. Billie Van explains that during the pandemic she was granted a work grant. With this work grant she explains that she has been provided with a certain security for a year. She describes that *“With this artist grant I am able to work on my projects and on my music for a year, so there is a certain security in that,”* she continues to explain that *“knowing a year ahead, for me, has given me a pretty okay future outlook.”*

Billie Van explains that *“I am not one of those who have been down in the basement because of corona.”* Nevertheless, she still explains that she has been through thoughts such as wondering how things will be able to work themselves out and wondering how the future will play out. She then states that she has comforted herself with the thought that *“I am an optimist, so somehow I am going to make it.”* However, Billie Van also mentions in her interview that *“I feel like I might need some more security and predictability in the future after everything opens up again.”*

Øyvind Blomstrøm explained during his interview that it seems that a lot of artists and musicians has gotten a flat attitude towards some of their projects and plans since *“everything feels so uncertain nowadays.”* He further explains that *“You never really know what will end up happening.”* He gives an example with saying that if he for example has been booked to work for a job in a couple of weeks, he is not sure whether or not that job will actually end up happening. Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that not only is it difficult psychologically speaking for the artist with things being so uncertain, but it also effects the families and the closest ones of the artists, such as artists’ families.

#### **4.9. Focus on Relations - Time for Family**

*“What can be considered as a highlight of the pandemic has been how much time we suddenly got to spend with our families,”* Billie Van explains. She notes that artists and musicians are used to having to work on weekends, when many people are having their weekends off work. With this, she explains that musicians and artists are used to often having to spend a lot of time away from their families because of work, such as when the artists are going on tour. *“It has been really great, not just for us as a family, but also for me, personally, to actually get some time off of work,”* she explains.

Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that when the kindergartens were shut down in March 2020, he focused all his time on spending it with his son for the first 5 weeks, instead of trying to focus on work. *“It was really nice,”* he notes.

Marianne Engebretsen explains with her situation under the pandemic that she feels like she may have found herself in a sort of fortunate position, reasoning this with that her plans for 2020 was to spend time recording her new album, as well as having a permission with her new baby that she got in March of 2020. She made these plans before the pandemic struck and explains that they somehow worked themselves out, with, for example, her getting to spend some time focusing on being a mom.

The Leprous-bassist, Simen Børven, explains that something that has kept his motivation up during the COVID-19 pandemic has been his family which he is grateful for getting to spend some more time with during the pandemic. Simen Børven explains that *“When we’re together, when we’re having fun together, in one way or another, that is when I experience that life makes the most sense.”* Further on, Simen Børven explains that *“Relations is probably the closest we can get to finding any meaning at all, I think.”*

#### **4.10. Worries for the Unestablished**

In his interview, Simen Børven explains that we are probably not even close to understanding the aftermath that this pandemic will have had for the music industry. He notes that it would be naïve to assume that once the restrictions of the pandemic have been further lifted, things will go back to normal. He further explains that how the pandemic will have affected each person is depending on the individual. He states that he worries the most for the unestablished artists, such as young musicians without any foundation.



Simen Børven explains that when it comes to how other artists are doing, and when it comes to mental health in general, he believes that those who probably will get struck the hardest by the restrictions that have been introduced by the government will not be those who already have been able to make a living off of music, but rather, he believes, that it will be those who can be considered to be unestablished. He explains that his band, Leprous, would probably not have been able to do their streaming-concerts and such if it were not for them already having an audience. Simen Børven argues that *«Those who do not have an audience already will probably have a challenge building one.»*

Marianne Engebretsen explains during her interview that when she went to school it gave her a lot of motivation to show and perform her work for other students. She describes this to be something that took part in her figuring out that she wanted to become an artist. She mentions how important feedback is in the process of being an artist and explains that it makes making and performing music *“both challenging and more fun.”* She touches upon how feedback is important, not just between artists themselves, but also between for example the artist and its audience. During the pandemic, many music students and people in the beginning phases of their music careers have been limited and as Simen Børven notes that *“2 years of a professional life kind of just disappear.”*

#### **4.11. Different priorities**

During the COVID-19 pandemic the interviewees focused on different things. Billie Van, for example, explains that during the pandemic she has prioritized doing what she can, such as songwriting, more admin-work and also, for her own sake, learning a new instrument – the pedal steel guitar. She explains that *“With the situation being like it is, you might as well try to get your heart rate down completely.”*

Marianne Engebretsen considers herself lucky for having planed specific and achievable plans before the pandemic struck. She mentions that she for example recently started working with a management and booking bureau for her music. Further she explains that she is working with her social media and planning how to promote her upcoming music. However, currently, she considers her main project to be writing new music.

Normally Simen Børven would be touring and playing music a lot, but due to the pandemic he is obviously not touring so much. During the pandemic, Simen Børven has focused a lot on recording, for example with his band Leprous and with his jazz-band “Say What”, amongst other things. He has also for example begun to focus on his own project, with focusing more on singing and writing his own music. He explains that in order to survive in an industry, such as the music industry, you have to be able to adapt. In a crisis like this, adaptability is key. The interviewees for this thesis proved that they were aware of this, in one way or another.

Øyvind Blomstrøm is currently mainly focusing on his band Orions Belte and is currently recording and creating with them. He is looking forward to maybe getting to play live again but uses the meantime to do the most and best that he can with his time whilst waiting for things to open up again.

Priorities change all the time, but the 4 interviewees for this thesis all seemed to use this time to the best of their abilities. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic has been limiting and restricted in many ways, the artists interviewed for this thesis seemed to try to make the best out of their time, as well as focusing on remaining productive.

Even though the 4 artists which I conducted the interviews with stated that they were doing fine during their interviews, they all showed an understanding and awareness around the possibility that there probably were artists during the pandemic who may experience this time as a breaking point, both career wise and also mentally speaking.

## **5. DISCUSSION**

In this part of the project, I will be comparing findings from the theoretical backdrop with the findings from the interviews, as well as trying to define some of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Norwegian artists. In this part of the thesis my main focuses are *comparing, discussing and defining*.

### **5.1. More of a Focus on Digitalization**

In the theoretical backdrop we looked into topics such as the music industry's digital age and the effect of digitalization. With digitalization, there has been introduced new potentials to the music industry. Peter Tschmuck notes that these new potentials has made it possible for artists to post content such as announcements and music videos to platforms such as Facebook and YouTube (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 183). Internet-platforms like these has the ability to be used as a sort of direct-communication between the artists and their fans. Also, another opportunity that has come along with digitalization is the opportunity for artists to be able to distribute their music directly through the Internet. With the different opportunities that have come along for artists through digitalization it has given the artists of the music industry the possibility to be able to control almost all the necessary aspects of a music career, such as music distribution, music marketing and music production. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 183).

In the interviews the interviewees mentioned how they have been more relying more on using digital tools, all from streaming platforms to having focused more on marketing on their social medias. Marianne Engebretsen, for example, explained that she did not really see much other effect of having released music during the pandemic than the response that she got from Instagram and such. Some of the interviewees explained that because the opportunity to market their music whilst doing live shows have basically been taken away, they then have been forced to switch to focus more onto for example using digital tools such as social media to be able to market their music and to keep up their activity.

#### **5.1.1. Virtual and Streaming Concerts**

One of the things that there has been a lot of focus on with digitalization during the COVID-19 pandemic is the switch from in-person live concerts to virtual and streaming concerts. The lockdown caused by the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in an unprecedented level of financial anxiety for artists and other people working within the live sector. Some artists were

depending on their live events in order to be able to make their ends meet (Hu, 2020). With the pandemic restrictions resulting in cancelling of shows and festivals this then led to a drastic stop to the essential live income for many artists. With this, many artists and other music industry-workers found themselves in quite a pressed situation. A respondent to this situation was virtual and streaming concerts.

During his interview, Simen Børven explains that he has been playing several streaming concerts, such as for example along with his band Leprous. He further mentions that he is curious to see what will happen in the future with certain alternative activities, such as for example with streaming concerts. There are questions of the future and whether virtual and streaming concerts are a temporary replacement of in-person live shows or whether they for example will become a new tool used for live shows and will be developed even further to for example become a new addition to regular live shows.

## **5.2. Placement of Workspace**

During the interview-process, some of the interviewees expressed gratitude towards having access to workspaces that were outside of their homes. Both Billie Van and Øystein Blomstrøm, for example, explains that their main location where they work is located outside of their homes. These spaces were still considered to be somewhat private and personal, though.

As mentioned in the theoretical backdrop, music history reports that it could be quite expensive to run a professional recording studio during earlier days. With this, it meant that most artists were unable to afford to create their own professional music studio at home. During the 1980s and the 1990s, however, with new digital-recording technologies the cost of tools and equipment for music was dramatically lowered and this situation changed. (Wikström, 2018, p. 126-127).

Patrik Wikström explains in his book that *“When the music business is in the cloud, the production of music is almost entirely disconnected from the physical geography”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 128). Wikström explains in his book that artists no longer were dependent on having to pay expensive rent to be able to get access to recording facilities, but that they now rather had the opportunity to *“make high-recordings in their own homes with the help of a laptop computer and a couple of decent condenser microphones,”* (Wikström, 2018, p. 128). Then,

with the Internet, it became possible for artists to work together on music whilst being able to be located in different places of the world.

Some of the interviewees, such as Simen Børven and Øyvind Blomstrøm, explained that they had been working on recording whilst being separate from their band members. With this, themes such as localization and placement of workspace has really made room for topics like these to be questioned and challenged during the pandemic.

### **5.3. Uncertainty**

It is not unusual for artists' work life to be considered untraditional. Many artists are used to having to experience irregular working hours and other factors which contributes to them experience working in the music industry as unstructured. With artists experiencing their work life as unstructured and untraditional, life of an artist often has the tendencies to be experienced as uncertain.

During the interview-process, Øyvind Blomstrøm explained that “*everything feels so uncertain nowadays.*” With this, he expressed that he did not really feel like he was able to know what would really end up happening anymore. An example of this Øyvind Blomstrøm explains that he felt uncertain whether the jobs that he got booked for actually would end up happening or if they would end up either being cancelled or postponed.

In the study “Specific demands and resources in the career of the Norwegian freelance musician” by Jonas Vaag, Fay Giæver and Ottar Bjerkeset, there was reported that musicians were struggling with experiencing having an unpredictable and unstructured life. The musicians from this study reported that they found it demanding to having to be able to create structure and stability within such a chaotic context as the music industry. (Vaag, Giæver and Bjerkeset, 2014).

One of the things that was pointed out in this study was that the conscientiousness, according to the Big Five personality model, explains how individuals differ in planning, organizing and completing tasks (Aalberg et. al., 2019, p. 3). The study reports that having a high level of conscientiousness predicted having work performance across different occupations and were negatively linked to psychological distress (Aalberg et al., 2019, p. 4).

Aalberg et. al. further explains that conscientious musicians are more likely to have valuable assets which makes them better equipped to plan ahead and to better be able to organize their

work settings, in the music industry which often can be experienced as unstable (Aalberg et al., 2019, p. 3-4). The study from Aalberg is interesting considering that the interviewees mentioned having focused on making plans and routines during the pandemic, as well as attempting to remain productive. In the interviews, the interviewees expressed that a key thing for them, which has helped to keep their motivation up, has been to attempt to make structure in something that is experienced very unstructured.

#### **5.4. The Importance of Productivity and Sense of Mastery**

The “Demands and Resources Associated with Mental Health among Norwegian Professional Musicians”-study mentioned in the theoretical backdrop figured that there were both contextual and personal variables contributing to professional musicians’ level of psychological distress. This study found *neuroticism* and *low sense of mastery* to be the most important contributors to musicians’ psychological distress. (Aalberg et al., 2019, p. 15).

A factor reported to be able to help an artist in their music career is for that artist to feel a general sense of control over their life and their environment. According to Aalberg, Saksvik-Lehouillier and Vaag a strong sense of mastery might help artists to become more successful within their occupation and in their lifestyle. This then also reported to result in less psychological distress for the artists. (Aalberg et al., 2019, p. 13).

When it comes to productivity, Angela Rose Whaley from the Amplify Music Conference noted that artists have reported to having dealt with feelings of guilt during the pandemic because they were not creating as much as they think they should. (Amplify Music, 2021, 17:57). Angela Rose Whaley comforts the artists/musicians with explaining that *“it’s okay if you haven’t been your most productive during a global pandemic, like that’s completely fine.”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 17:57).

#### **5.5. Vulnerable Positions**

In the theoretical drop it was mentioned how copyright is considered to be an essential part of the music industry. Many artists are making money and benefitting off of copyright. However though, it is rare that artists are able to make enough money off of copyright to be able to make their ends meet. Peter Tschmuck argued in his book, “The Economics of Music”, that the rise of streaming has led to artists’ income becoming so low that even superstars have

become unable to live off of their streaming payouts alone. Further, Peter Tschmuck argues that if seen from the perspective of artists, the music streaming should be considered as “*just an additional income source*”. (Tschmuck, 2017, p. 193). During the pandemic, whilst the music industry is experiencing what can be considered to be a crisis in the live sector, the music industry’s artists also are experiencing a crisis. The live sector basically shutting down has led to an important income for artists drastically changing.

In the theoretical backdrop Mark Banks explained that because of the restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic, many cultural workers who either are self-employed, does freelance, or who are dependent and precarious, are finding themselves among those who are struggling the most during this pandemic.

Through the interviews, the interviewees acknowledged that artists are finding themselves in even more vulnerable positions than before, with for example discussing fall outs of the music industry to even some expressing that they have thought about finding themselves even more secure positions. The interviewees for this master thesis reported that they noticed several other artists that either got themselves new jobs or went back to school during the pandemic. Billie Van explained in her interview that during the pandemic she had to come to understand just how vulnerable her profession really is. She explained that during the pandemic she had been experiencing and thinking more through just how uncertain her profession is, especially seen in context of the long run.

With acknowledging how much of a competitive field the music industry was before the pandemic, with for example an article from Billboard Magazine in 2004 stating that “*Charles Darwin would be proud,*” because the “*harsh music climate is certainly putting his survival-of-the-fittest theory to the test,*” (Billboard Magazine, 2004), and with taking into context that the artist sector is experiencing such an amount of fall outs during the pandemic, it may seem like the artist profession may be experienced as more of a vulnerable profession than earlier.

## **5.6. Even More Prone to Psychological Distress**

It is reported that artists made up for a vulnerable group when it comes to psychological distress, such as anxiety, depression and insomnia, even before the pandemic. The theoretical backdrop reported that generally speaking, artists are reported to be more prone to suffer from psychological distress than for example the general workforce are.

The two researchers Sally Anne Gross and Dr. George Musgrave explained in their study “Can Music Make You Sick?” that their findings reported that 68.5% of their participants in

their study reported to have experienced depression, whilst 71.1% out of these participants reported to have experienced panic attacks and/or high levels of anxiety (Gross, S. A., & Musgrave, G., 2017, p. 5). With the “Can Music Make You Sick?”-study Sally Anne Gross and Dr. George Musgrave were able to prove how serious of a problem that mental health within the music industry was before the COVID-19 pandemic struck.

During the Amplify Music conference of 2021, Debbie Carroll, explained that a recent music and wellness survey reported that over 26 percent of its respondents noted higher propensity for depression and anxiety during the pandemic, as well as 62 percent of respondents reporting experiencing high levels of stress associated with financial wellbeing during the pandemic. The co-author of “Can Music Make You Sick?”, Sally Ann Gross, added that *“The overall levels of anxiety that were always there for precarious workers were absolutely turned upside down”*.

Ace Piva also explained during the conference that many people have found themselves struggling during the COVID-19 pandemic and that it seems that the pandemic amplified issues which is negatively related to emotional distress (Amplify Music, 2021, 2:48).

However, some good news though, according to Ace Piva, *“is that mental health is expanding both in terms of scientific research, different approaches to treatment and how the public views it and in the media,”* (Amplify Music, 2021, 2:07).

In the interviews conducted for this thesis the artists expressed awareness and concern towards struggles such as for example lacking inspiration and motivation in artists working- and daily-lives during the pandemic. Øyvind Blomstrøm, for example, explained that he has worried for artist’s “spirits”. With this, he explains that he can tell that there are a lot of musicians who have felt discouraged and hopeless under the pandemic. He further explains that he has seen several musicians expressing frustration over how things have been handled when it comes to subjects such as the Norwegian music money stream and how the Norwegian government has handled things, as well as having noticed fellow artists dealing with constantly having felt uncertain during the pandemic. Øyvind Blomstrøm points out that *“Mental health is like this really big thing that we haven’t been able to see the outcome of yet in the pandemic.”*



## 5.7. Curiosity for the Future

Karen M. Staller explained in her article that *“Improvisation became the name of the game,”* (Staller, 2021) with the COVID-19 pandemic bringing its restrictions, such as having to reduce crowd sizes, keeping physically distant and with having to stay generally isolated. These restrictions have had a detrimental effect on the live sector of the music industry. With the music industry having experienced such an amount of uncertainty, disruptions and struggles, during the COVID-19 pandemic, the music industry hopefully can take these experiences to learn from and to use them to better be able to improve the industry for the future.

Through the interview-process, the interviewees mentioned that they were curious for the future. They had some worries, such as worries of crashing of dates of releasing and plans that have been postponed during the pandemic. However, they also expressed a certain level of excitement when it came it even more restrictions being lifted and things going back to “normal”.

Simen Børven argues that it would be naïve to assume that once the restrictions of the pandemic have been further lifted, things will go back to normal. He also notes that we are probably not even close to understanding the aftermath that this pandemic will have had for the music industry. This argument can be linked to Mark Banks statement that the consequences caused by the pandemic for cultural workers in the short time might be considered as disastrous, but the longer-term effect of the pandemic for cultural workers is still yet to be known (Banks, 2020, p. 649).

Also, it would be naïve to think that once things within the music industry seem “fixed” from the pandemic, it is. The COVID-19 pandemic has worked as a sort of global stress test. This stress test has ended up revealing several gaps and weaknesses with the music industry. It has brought some of the music industry’s many flaws up to the surface and showed us some areas and issues of the music industry which must be tackled in order for the music industry to improve itself. Trying times, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, has yet again proven the importance of adaptability for the music industry. Challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic has brought onto the music industry are not just meant to be overcome, but we are also meant to learn something from them in order to better prepare the music industry for future challenges.

## 5.8. Defining the Main Effects

From combining the interviews with the theoretical backdrop of this master thesis, it may seem as though the pressures which already existed for artists, both professionally and mentally, just seem to be increasing. In this this thesis, the effects that will be defined as the main effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Norwegian artists are focused on being introspective. With this, it also needs to be noted that this thesis is just able to provide a perspective of such a broad and complicated topic, so that is what it will aim to do – providing a perspective.

Introspective effects that the pandemic seems to have had on Norwegian artists are for example that artists have mentioned that they are experiencing more *uncertainty* and they are finding themselves in *more vulnerable positions*. Through the pandemic there has also been several reports proving that artists during the pandemic have been more prone to psychological distress, with for example several artists experiencing anxiety and/or curiosity towards not only their own futures, but also for the future of the music industry.

With this said, there are certainly several other effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has on Norwegian artists, but these three effects mentioned here are the ones who, during the process of working with this thesis, stood out and showed up the most frequently.

With this, this thesis would define the main effects that COVID-19 has had on Norwegian artists to be:

1. Artists experiencing increased uncertainty.
2. Artists experiencing increased vulnerability.
3. Artists being more prone to psychological distress.

## 6. CONCLUSION

This master thesis has been an explorative research of the effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Norwegian artists. With this, topics such as artists' perceived mental health and wellbeing has been explored through exploring artist's daily and working life's during the pandemic. This research has also gathered some perspectives on the artist's role in the music industry, for example with trying to get a better understanding of the artist sector and how it is to be an artist in today's music industry, as well also having gathered some thoughts and attitudes towards the future.

With attempting to define the main effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on artists, this thesis attempted to narrow it down to three effects deemed the most important, which this thesis concluded being: *artists experiencing increased uncertainty*, *artists experiencing increased vulnerability* and *artists being more prone to psychological distress*.

This thesis' foundation was made up by a combination of the theoretical backdrop presented, as well as the four interviews which was conducted with four Norwegian artists. The interviews provided a new perspective of how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Norwegian artists. The interview-process for this thesis was perceived as essential in order to better be able to understand how artists currently were doing under the pandemic.

Effects that digitalization has had on artists and the financial side that COVID-19 needs to be mentioned and looked further into. However, in this thesis, the main focus was put on attempting to find the more introspective effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Norwegian artists.

With providing my point of view as a Music Business and Management-student I hope that this thesis can open up the conversation and provide insights to artists wellbeing and work life, as well as this thesis being a documentation of reflection of the COVID-19 pandemic to look back upon for future researchers of the music industry, especially focusing on the how the artist sector was reported doing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This thesis has been done to the best of my ability as a master-student, but it could be really interesting to see what other scholars and research would have to say on the topic. The further

along I got in the process of this thesis, the more obvious did it become that this thesis would only be able to provide a perspective to my area of research. It has attempted to define the main effects that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on Norwegian artists. However, further research is not only advised but seen as necessary.

This thesis has provided a perspective of how the artist sector was reported doing during the COVID-19 pandemic. This research has been a valuable process for me as a student to get a better understanding in not just the artist sector, but it has also helped me to get a bit better understanding of the music industry itself, with its issues and vulnerabilities. Further research needs to be done, not only for me personally, but also for this topic in general.

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