

2019

The Music Industry Has a Mental Health Problem

Manny Manriquez

University of the Pacific, m_manriquez2@u.pacific.edu

Manny Manriquez (2020) is pursuing a BM in Music Management.

This article was written as part of the curriculum for the Bachelor of Music in Music Management and the Bachelor of Science in Music Industry Studies at University of the Pacific. Each student conducted research based on his or her own areas of interest and study.

To learn more about the program, visit: go.pacific.edu/musicindustry

Follow this and additional works at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass>



Part of the [Arts Management Commons](#), [Audio Arts and Acoustics Commons](#), [Music Education Commons](#), [Musicology Commons](#), [Music Pedagogy Commons](#), [Music Performance Commons](#), [Other Music Commons](#), [Psychology Commons](#), and the [Radio Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Manriquez, Manny (2019) "The Music Industry Has a Mental Health Problem," *Backstage Pass*: Vol. 2 : Iss. 1 , Article 19.

Available at: <https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/backstage-pass/vol2/iss1/19>

This Opinion & Analysis is brought to you for free and open access by the Conservatory of Music at Scholarly Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Backstage Pass by an authorized editor of Scholarly Commons. For more information, please contact mgibney@pacific.edu.



The Music Industry Has a Mental Health Problem

By Manny Manriquez

According to a study done by the University of Westminster and MusicTank of musicians, 68.5% of 2,211 said they have experienced depression, and 71.1% said they had experienced severe anxiety or panic attacks. These results show that musicians are 3 times more susceptible to depression than the average person. (“Our Research” Music Minds Matter).

Musicians are unfortunately alienated from society. They spend countless hours honing their craft and performing while their friends are out having a good time. They have little to no time to socialize, make strong bonds with people, or maintain bonds due to their irregular and unstable work hours. Since musicians are so alienated from society they often feel like they don't belong. Touring conditions are rough. Touring musicians are always on the move and may literally feel like they don't have a place where they belong. They also have terrible sleep schedules, and poor meals due to being on the road and performing really late nights on most nights. This makes them more likely to abuse caffeine, sleeping drugs, and migraine medications. Also, since they are always traveling they have to leave their family, friends, and usual support groups behind. This definitely puts them at a mental disadvantage.

When artists are depressed they are very likely to turn to drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism. Drugs and alcohol have always been around in the music business and their use has been popularized by many artists. It's gotten to the point where drugs and alcohol are viewed, by many, as part of the job or culture of being a musician. This is bad because drugs and alcohol make depression even more severe. (Substance Abuse and Depression, a dangerous downward Spiral”). Once a musician becomes dependent on drugs and alcohol as a coping mechanism, it becomes significantly more difficult for them to not be depressed. This is not only bad for the artists, it's also bad for young kids with impressionable minds. Kids who are easily influenced by

artists like Lil Pump who portray a lifestyle of abusing Xanax and Lean (“Bradley. Xanax is not the wave”), and many other artists who romanticize various drugs or depression in general.

Artists are now romanticizing depression and drugs because it is profitable. While some artists like Mac Miller really did struggle with depression and drug addiction, some may be portraying that they do for the money. After Lil Peep died of an overdose, his brother Karl Ahr mentioned how his death was an accident, and that he was only acting depressed because it was profitable. (“Genius. Lil Peep’s Brother Reveals how Lil Peep was paid to be sad”). This is an article on “Genius” quoting Lil Peep’s brother saying “He didn't really take five Xanax pills a day, but he would take them and then post on Instagram about it.” He explains how it would pay more for his brother to seem depressed, and using drugs as a quick way to deal with it, than to seem happy. Fake depression or not, we have unfortunately lost many talented artists to this vicious cycle of depression and drugs over the last few years. Rapper Mac Miller stated “I was definitely going through a drug problem, and I think it was more my state of mind, I was pretty depressed.” Three years after that interview Mac Miller was again going through some bad depression after a break up and obtaining a DUI. After that he soon lost his life to an overdose on September 7, 2018. Rapper Lil Peep who romanticized depression and rapped about taking 5 Xanax pills everyday was found dead in his tour bus due to overdose on November 15, 2017.

Instead of romanticizing depression and drugs, some artists have taken a more ethical and positive approach to the topic of depression in their music. Rapper Logic put the suicide prevention hotline on the title of one of his songs “1-800-273-8255 ft. Alessia Cara & Khalid”. This song tells a message of someone who was depressed, feeling suicidal, but looked for professional help and got it. The song was wildly successful with 135 million views on YouTube and many positive comments. The song was also performed in the 2018 Grammys and tripled the

amount of calls being made to the hotline according to this CNN article (“Benson, Lindsay. “Logic's Grammys Performance Tripled Calls”). This is a more realistic and productive way to tackle the issue of depression than to just romanticize the notion that drugs could fix it. Joyner Lucas took a brutally realistic approach to how bad depression really is on his “I'm Sorry (508)-507-2209” song making it very clear that depression is a very serious matter with a statement at the end of the video telling viewers to call the hotline if they or anyone they know are suffering from thoughts of suicide or depression. Joyner was met with positive feedback all over twitter.

Moving forward we need to provide musicians with more professional mental health services. Organizations like We Rise LA, Silence the Shame, MusiCares, The WishArt Group, and others have been working on this. More information about them is listed on this site (“7 Mindful Organizations For Musicians & Their Mental Health”). We also need to stop romanticizing depression and drugs as artists, even if it is profitable. Finally, we must continue to educate youth on the dangers of using drugs and the devastating impact of depression, encouraging them to get help whenever they need it.

Works Cited

“Our Research.” Music Minds Matter, www.musicmindsmatter.org.uk/the-study/.

“From the outside looking in: sense of belonging, depression, and suicide risk.”

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/281823481_From_the_Outside_Looking_In_Sense_of_Belonging_Depression_and_Suicide_Risk

“Working in the music industry can be bad for your mental health”

<https://riotfest.org/2018/11/music-industry-bad-mental-health/>

“Everything Mac Miller has ever said about drug abuse, depression, and death.”

<https://www.etonline.com/everything-mac-miller-has-said-about-drug-abuse-depression-and-death-109259>

“Lil Peep’s Brother reveals how Lil Peep was paid to be sad.”

<https://genius.com/discussions/301980-Lil-peeps-brother-reveals-how-peep-was-paid-to-be-sad>

“Substance Abuse and Depression: A Dangerous Downward-Spiral.” PsyCom.net - Mental Health Treatment Resource Since 1986, www.psycom.net/depression-substance-abuse

Bradley. “‘Xanax Is Not the Wave’: An Open Letter to Lil Pump.” DJBooth, 10 July 2017,

djbooth.net/features/2017-07-10-open-letter-to-lil-pump

Benson, Lindsay. "Logic's Grammys Performance Tripled Calls to a National Suicide Prevention Line." CNN, Cable News Network, 4 Feb. 2018, www.cnn.com/2018/02/03/us/logic-grammys-performance-suicide-prevention-calls-trnd/index.html

"7 Mindful Organizations For Musicians & Their Mental Health." Output, 10 July 2018, output.com/blog/music-mental-health