

CHAPTER 7

MUSIC INDUSTRY IN CRISIS: THE IMPACT OF A NOVEL CORONAVIRUS ON TOURING METAL BANDS, PROMOTERS, AND VENUES

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ABSTRACT

In March of 2020 the world began to take widespread preventative measures against the spread of a novel coronavirus through travel restrictions, quarantines, and limitations on social gatherings. These restrictions resulted in the immediate closing of many businesses, including concert venues, and also put an abrupt end to live music performances across Europe and the United States. This had immediate implications for touring metal bands, as bands earn most of their income touring, and many found themselves in a situation where they experienced substantial financial losses alongside negative affective ramifications. This chapter utilized evidence from qualitative interviews and public statements to draw inferences about the impact of COVID-19 on the music industry, with a particular focus on touring musicians and their respective managers, promoters, and booking agencies. Musicians reported negative affective and financial ramifications as a result of COVID-19, but they also reported financial support from metal music fans that made the fallout from the pandemic less severe. Further inferences were drawn about how the closures of concert venues adversely impacted the communities dependent on them, as concerts serve a stimulating role for surrounding businesses.

Keywords: COVID-19, music industry, heavy metal, affective consequences, financial consequences

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1. Introduction

The year 2020 was detrimental for many industries due to the spread of COVID-19, a highly contagious novel coronavirus that led to global shutdowns of businesses and the federally mandated prevention of large gatherings of people. One of the industries that experienced especially dire circumstances was the music industry, as the small businesses that operated as concert venues were at risk of permanent closure, and touring musicians found themselves without a source of income and emotional catharsis due to mandates prohibiting group gatherings including concert audiences. To understand this impact, information was gathered from literature, media sources, public statements, and interviews were conducted in the months immediately following the global spread of COVID-19 in March of 2020.

COVID-19 was a novel zoonotic coronavirus that was first detected on January 6th and was linked to the Huanan Seafood Market in Wuhan, China (Pan et al., 2020). The virus put vulnerable populations in particular at risk, because it had the capacity, much like other types of coronavirus, to lead to pneumonia and acute respiratory distress syndrome (ARDS). Coupled with its distressingly infectious nature (Liu, Gayle, Wilder-Smith, & Rocklöv, 2020), the virus became a global concern by March as it had spread worldwide. Its spread was initially difficult to gauge or detect due to many infected individuals being asymptomatic or having minimal symptoms, such as a fever, that could be associated with other forms of illness (Hu et al., 2020). Most individuals were at low risk of serious symptoms, however, there was great variability in the severity, onset, longevity, and complications associated with the virus (Bernheim et al., 2020), but those at greatest risk were vulnerable populations and individuals with potentially comorbid health concerns, such as cardiovascular diseases, hypertension, malignancies, and diabetes (Carli et al., 2020). One out of twenty COVID-19 cases required intensive care, which put global healthcare systems at risk of being overwhelmed (Murthy, Gomersall, & Fowler, 2020) without an adequate number of physicians, ventilators, hospital beds and treatments to meet the rapidly increasing numbers of cases (Emanuel et al., 2020). Although towards the end of the year many treatments were showing clinical promise, it still remained unclear how long COVID-19 would persist in influencing daily life, and the particularly strong sense of ambiguity about the future and how it was impacting the music industry is what is highlighted in this chapter. Governments worldwide acted quickly to try and control the spread of the virus, which led to widespread business closures, strict quarantines, and mandated restrictions on both public and private gatherings within the United States, Europe, and many other parts of the world. At the beginning of the pandemic, many areas of the United States required that people remain in their homes except to acquire food

or essential supplies, and they were not permitted to leave for other reasons unless they were considered ‘essential employees.’ These restrictions quickly crippled many small businesses, such as restaurants and concert venues, which left many people unemployed and without income.

In addition to the aforementioned financial concerns, viral pandemics come with a multitude of affective consequences too. In addition to the anxieties surrounding the contagious nature of the virus and the negative stigmas associated with being sick (Maunder et al., 2003), the quarantines and lack of permissible social interaction also had immediate consequences. Although the full extent of affective consequences following COVID-19 were not known at the time of this writing, insights can be drawn from earlier coronaviral pandemics. Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and depression were commonplace during the SARS pandemic in Toronto, Canada and during the 2015 MERS outbreak, especially for healthcare workers (Reynolds et al., 2008; Lee, Kang, Cho, Kim, & Park, 2018; Hawryluck et al., 2004; although see the work of Hull, 2005). Longer periods of quarantine have been associated with higher levels of psychological distress, including anger and confusion (Brooks et al., 2020) that stems largely from the ambiguity associated with the longevity of incarceration and the pandemic that caused it (Barbisch, Koenig, & Shin, 2015). There has also been some early work conducted that shows that the isolation associated with COVID-19 lockdowns elevated levels of depression and anxiety among those quarantined and increased with the duration of the quarantine dependent on feelings of control and coping (van Mulukom et al., 2020).

2. COVID-19 & The Music Industry

The COVID-19 pandemic caused irreversible and long-term damage to many industries, including the music industry. The closings that followed widespread quarantines, travel restrictions, and federal rules against large gatherings caused millions of people to lose their jobs in the United States alone (Long, 2020), with 700,000 of those jobs being lost in March when the outbreak first began in the West (Keshner, 2020). As many as 43% of U.S. businesses were at risk of closing permanently without substantial government assistance according to a survey by the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and MetLife. The situation was especially bad within the music industry, due to concerts requiring large gatherings, so concert venues were among the first businesses to close and they would be among the last to reopen. It was estimated by the National Independent Venue Association that 90% of music venues in the United States were at risk of closing permanently without federal aid well beyond

the measures that were in place at the time (Pasbani, 2020). Similarly, 556 music venues were identified as being at risk for permanent closure within the United Kingdom without substantial federal aid (Jackson, 2020). Many venues had zero sources of revenue during the pandemic despite continued bills to pay. It was estimated that if venues were not able to reopen by 2021 that it would result in a loss of nine billion dollars in ticket sales alone. Even when the pandemic eased or when federal restrictions on large gatherings would be lifted, that still would not cause live music venues to immediately recover because there was already evidence that public anxieties about contagion would persist. Data collected from Nielsen Music and MRC Data indicated that 21% of respondents would not start going back to concerts for at least five months after the pandemic ends, and they also found evidence of more permanent changes, as 2% of respondents reported that they would never go to a concert again (Levy, 2020). The impact on the music industry wasn't limited to smaller concert venues, as it also impacted arenas/stadiums and their respective staff; trucking, shipping, and logistics companies that work with moving venue equipment around; the travel and lodging industries that are deeply intertwined with live events; production companies and vendors that supply equipment; artists, musicians, promoters, event organizers and their respective teams; and all of the individuals that help design concert performances (Rivero, 2020). Some concerts can take months or even years to organize, so all of these industries would similarly need a lengthy period of time to recover, especially since it would be difficult to predict the behavior of event consumers after the pandemic. Recovery would also be stagnated behind continually rescheduled concerts, causing a lull for when bands could begin to book concerts after the rescheduled events finally occurred. It is important to note that if many music venues would close permanently, it wouldn't only hurt arts and entertainment in those communities, but rather, it would also hurt the local economies where the venues are homed too. It has been estimated that within the United States that an average of \$12 is spent on economic activities such as eating and drinking in local businesses that surround a music industry for every \$1 that is spent on a concert ticket (Levy, 2020). Without concert venues, many communities would not receive the economic benefits that would otherwise be generated.

An additional side-effect of the pandemic on the music industry was the impact it had on postal services. Some countries faced temporary bans on incoming and outgoing mail, causing delays for record labels trying to distribute music internationally. There was an even greater risk in the United States of postal services having a lasting impact on music distribution because there was increased strain on the United States Postal Service (USPS), both due to the pandemic and due to political influences, which had the potential to massively damage

independent record labels in the United States. The reason for this is that the USPS offers a budget option – media mail – that is used to ship media including music inexpensively. If this option went away, it could potentially cripple small record labels since consuming physical media was already an increasingly niche behavior despite many heavy metal music fans being devoted to it, and a dramatic increase in cost per unit sold could discourage music consumers to the detriment of independent music labels (Hogan, 2020).

Many individuals in the music industry were impacted, including concert venue owners, touring musicians, and the individuals that book, promote, and manage concerts and concert tours. More specifically, many employees were being laid off by their respective employers to keep their businesses afloat, including soundboard operators, lighting technicians, instrument technicians, accountants, directors, bookers, promoters, tour managers, music engineers, venue workers, crew members, and many others (Hissong, 2020). Some insight can be drawn about financial losses from the fundraising pages that were launched following concert cancellations when travel bans and bans on large gatherings went into immediate effect in March. The popular music venue Reggies in Chicago was temporarily closed due to restrictions on large gatherings, so they put up a GoFundMe for \$10,000 to help pay their employees and help prevent their business from collapsing while they were unable to host concerts. Similarly, the popular metal venue Saint Vitus Bar, which is located in Brooklyn, New York, requested \$15,000 through a Kickstarter page to help make sure that they would survive the pandemic (Shaffer, 2020).

3. Consequences for Touring Musicians

Touring musicians are often financially dependent on the income they make touring, which provides 75% of the income for most bands (Pasbani, 2020). Public fundraising pages provide insight into the losses that touring musicians were facing following concert cancellations caused by COVID-19. For example, the progressive metal musician Devin Townsend launched a GoFundMe request for \$50,000 to recoup losses after lighting rigs, video screens, tour buses, work visas, merchandise production, international flights, and other aspects of his tour had already been paid for prior to the tour's cancellation. Many similar costs for bands that either had to cancel a planned tour or prematurely cancel a tour they had already commenced would be non-refundable, causing many bands to be at risk of losing thousands of dollars without guarantees about when they could continue making income from touring. As another example, the Finnish metal bands Insomnium and Omnium Gatherum launched a GoFundMe for €48,685 because their U.S. tour was cancelled after completing only a single concert. A

similar set of circumstances occurred for the Italian metal band Rhapsody, who following the cancellation of a Latin American tour, created a GoFundMe for \$40,000. Musicians are also often reliant on touring for the affective wellbeing that it brings them (Lamont, 2012), which is particularly important, since metal music and culture has a large number of fans and musicians that struggle with mental health (Messick, Aranda, & Day, 2020).

I contacted a number of musicians that had been impacted by COVID-19 identified by concert cancellations or public posts on their respective social media sites to better understand and contextualize the financial and emotional consequences of the pandemic. These musicians included Chris Pervelis of New York band Internal Bleeding, Devin Swank of Ohio-based Sanguisugabogg, Enrico Schettino from Italian band Hideous Divinity, Lille Gruber from Germany's Defeated Sanity, Phil Tougas from the Canadian band Chthe'ilist, Tom Knizner from Chicago's Cardiac Arrest, and Tucker Thomasson from Indiana's Throne of Iron.

3.1. Financial Consequences for Touring Musicians

Touring International concert cancellations for a few of these bands, including Internal Bleeding and Throne of Iron, resulted in about \$4,000 in financial losses for flights alone, although thankfully many of them were able to get that amount refunded due to the unique circumstances. Bands are also dependent on merchandise sales on tours, as most touring bands operate under a tight and challenging budget even under normal circumstances, so bands that were planning on touring and already had merchandise printed were at risk of major deficits. Lille of Defeated Sanity told me that his band was at risk of going bankrupt due to the cancellation of their American tour after completing only four days of the 30-day tour, however, Defeated Sanity came up with a plan to recoup their losses, as did many other bands that were facing major losses following cancelled tours. Lille had three days before he had to return to Germany, so he launched an online store so that Defeated Sanity fans could purchase the tour merchandise that was printed for the cancelled tour, and he shipped out each order prior to taking his flight home. Metal fans knew that many of their favorite bands were facing immediate and intense financial hardship due to the pandemic, so many fans supported their favorite bands through online purchases and donations. Similarly, music fans also made donations to the fundraising webpages of their favorite music venues, which greatly helped venues like Reggies and Saint Vitus (Shaffer, 2020). Parallels can be drawn between this communal display of support and other collectivistic aspects of metal music culture, such as in the rhythmic dance known as moshing, where metal fans immediately help any member of the community stand up if they have been knocked to the ground, preventing injury (Riches, 2011; 2012). It could be that the cultural prioritization of group support inherent for dedicated

metal music fans played a role in metal music consumers supporting their favorite bands and venues during the pandemic. In the case of Defeated Sanity, fans placed 300 orders in those three days, and left donations of one to eighty dollars on top of that. Similarly, Throne of Iron and Ctthe'ilist also successfully made some of their money back as a result of fans generously spending money on their merchandise during their time of need. In addition to the losses experienced after immediate concert cancellations, the pandemic also meant delays in album releases, stuttering yet another source of income for musicians. Without being able to tour in support of an album, many bands and record labels postponed the releases of their upcoming albums, including the bands that Devin Swank was a member of. Sometimes these delays would also be beyond the control of bands and labels, because the temporary closings of many businesses meant that many of the factories that printed the vinyls, tapes, and cassettes saw prolonged delays for printing new releases until their businesses could reopen after federally mandated quarantines, travel restrictions, and restrictions on gatherings. Just to provide a fuller perspective, it was not the case that all touring bands were dependent on the income from these cancelled tours, as Tom from Cardiac Arrest clarified for me, as in the case of his band touring was more of an occasional hobby, and so they were not dependent on that income and were not at risk of substantial losses, however, that doesn't mean that the tour cancellations did not have negative consequences for Tom and his bandmates, such as emotional consequences.

3.2. Affective Consequences for Touring Musicians

To fully understand what the loss of live concerts meant for touring musicians, I felt it was important to first understand what it was that they were losing, so I asked my interviewees what playing their music live meant to them. Devin from Sanguisugabogg told me:

Honestly it's the greatest feeling ever. Only a few things can come close. Writing music and coming up with lyrics, patterns and vocal styles is awesome but performing is where it is all at for me so I can showcase all the hard work I put into my craft.

For Chris of Internal Bleeding, it also played a fundamental role in maintaining a feeling of youth:

It means the world to me. When I am on stage, my 52 years of age simply melt away and I feel like I am 20 years old again. It's the most important outlet I have, and being denied that is akin to being denied oxygen.

For others, such as Enrico from Hideous Divinity, playing music wasn't just cathartic; it also played a role in providing his life with meaning:

As obvious as it may sound, it still is the reason why we do all this. When you play in front of people, your music comes alive, and so do you. It's both fulfilling and cathartic, in its most classical meaning. It doesn't matter how long the trip to get to the venue was, the lack of food or showers, the sleep deprivation - you jump on stage and it's all like washed away. You stop asking yourself existential questions about why you're doing it, and all acquires meaning.

Given how powerful and positive the effective and functional roles that live performances play for touring musicians, it comes of little surprise that the sudden removal of that aspect of their lives, especially when combined with utter ambiguity about when they can return to playing live, results in massive affective consequences. Chris from Internal Bleeding explained how he felt only moments after announcing that his band's upcoming European tour had been cancelled:

This is truly heart-breaking for us. We've been working towards being on a major European tour for a long time and now that we finally secured one, it has all come crashing to the ground... I hate to admit it, but depression is already setting in... I have experienced a wide range of emotions ranging from sadness and let-down to fear and paranoia. I am starting to settle into the reality of it all and will just have to resign myself to it and ride it out.

Chris also explained that he had a lot of anxiety about not knowing when touring could resume, which was especially salient for him as a musician that was growing older. The stakes were much higher for him than for younger musicians:

Honestly, for me, it's a race against time. I am not getting any younger, and touring the past few years has become physically demanding on me. Sadly, I don't know how much more touring time I have left and the longer this keeps going, the more time I am going to lose.

The uncertainty of the future especially bothered Devin from Sanguisugabogg, as his band had to stop activities right as they were seeing a meteoric climb in popularity, but he still appealed to the sense of community that largely defined metal music culture:

I feel worthless not being on stage and the uncertainty bums me out but every other band and musician is dealing with the same shit so at least we're all in this situation together.

Enrico Schettino described touring as being essential to his personhood, as he described that without being able to play live, he would feel incomplete, "Like a big part [of myself] would be missing," and he also helped bring some perspective to what it was like planning for the future during such turbulent times:

When you face an exceptional situation like this, there's one thing for sure - no one knows exactly what will happen, and when. It's impossible to make plans, only projections provided

by more or less trustworthy data. We may believe things will get better in the next months, but no one knows for sure.

Phil Tougas of Chthe'list had more mixed emotions about his sudden inability to tour, due largely to his own criticisms about himself:

It's a love and hate relationship. On one hand, playing in front of a crowd is the most powerful feeling in the world and I would do everything to live on the road and do it every day. I was made for this lifestyle. On the other hand, I've played hundreds of shows in my life across 25 countries, and there's only about 5% of these shows that I would say I've put on a performance that I would deem satisfactory in my own musical standards. Is it because it has taken decades for me to attempt to overcome personal, physical and mental issues? Or is it because I push myself too hard and am too picky with myself and how I play? Probably a mix of all of these. I should also practice way more. Luckily these days I've gotten better at handling all of this.

Regardless of the individual, the immediate response to being unable to tour and there being no certainty when touring could resume was largely negative. Realizing this, I also asked the musicians how they were coping with these feelings and the inability to tour. Tucker of Throne of Iron explained to me that humor was important for his band as they struggled through the pandemic:

I'd like to think that in spite of being angry over the sheer inconvenience of it all, that my bandmates and I have kept a good sense of humor about things. Humor is typically our coping mechanism for when things are frustrating or scary, and there was definitely no shortage of it during our, for lack of a better term, frustrating experience.

Many bands coped by trying to remain active and productive in other ways, so many changed their function away from touring and instead towards writing new music. Phil Tougas told me that all of his bands would become 'studio bands' while the pandemic was ongoing, and that the pandemic itself could serve as songwriting inspiration not only for himself, but for many other bands and musicians too.

The issues that musicians were facing had no modern equivalent in terms of the extent to which the music industry had been disrupted, however, Chris Pervelis, a resident of New York, and whose late drummer (Bill Tolley) served as a first responder during the September 11th terrorist attacks, was able to note one parallel:

9/11 caused quite a few issues for us and forced us to cancel quite a few shows because our drummer was working the attack site with the fire department. That's the closest comparison I can think of, and even that didn't compare in scale to the logistical problem the virus has created.

4. The Impact on Promoters, Booking Agencies, & Band Managers

The last area I want to highlight about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the music industry is about its influence on the people that arrange live concert events: promoters, bookers, and band managers. Arranging a concert tour is an involved process, and many individuals make a living off of that job alone, whereas others are involved in arranging concerts as more of a hobby. Regardless, all individuals involved in live concert booking, whether on a large-scale, small-scale, or managerial level, all experienced consequences following the 2020 coronaviral pandemic. The touring musicians I had interviewed shared their concerns about how this would impact the individuals that book concerts. Tom from Cardiac Arrest explained:

It is going to hurt the legitimate promoters immensely. These are the ones that put their asses on the line to have a good show. They pay for flights/travel, feed and water the bands, get them accommodations, and whatever else.

Tucker from Throne of Iron elaborated:

The financial ramifications on the promoters and bookers of events like this as well as tours is immense. I can't begin to fathom how much money is being lost right now, between booking guarantees for bands and flights and lodging and food. It's simply staggering.

In order to gain further perspective, I interviewed individuals that ran large-scale, full-time booking agencies, local promoters, and booking agencies. These individuals were contacted following public posts made on their social media accounts about concert cancellations. The individual most greatly and negatively impacted from my interviewees was Bastian Doblekar who runs a booking agency called Master of Metal with his wife. Master of Metal used to operate out of Slovenia but Bastian later moved his agency to Spain. In addition to booking concert tours, booking as many as 80 shows per year per band across multiple countries, Master of Metal was also responsible for the Metalcamp music festival that existed from 2004-2012 that would annually cater to 12,000 heavy metal music fans. Bastian explained to me that when a band would contact him for a tour, he needed to know at least four months in advance, and then he would have to figure out the logistics of the tour: the most appropriate route, mileage and gas, and the payment each promoter guarantees each band. He also clarified to me that his losses were not limited to money:

Well, I spent hours upon hours since October to book a 16-day tour for a band. It was a lot of stress to navigate around all of the bigger tours to get this tour booked for them [because large, competing tours can lessen attendance of smaller tours]. I didn't lose financially nor did I gain. However, time spent, to me, is more valuable than money. A lot of messages and emails went out. Many didn't respond. Many were read with no response. Some cities didn't

work out and the locations had to be moved whilst trying to keep drive times reasonable. Dates were confirmed only to have some fall through and once again get confirmed elsewhere. In some places local support was just unavailable and then once again a date had to get moved. Negotiations, creating flyers, getting bands, staying on top of things with the promoters, etc. It was like this up until almost two weeks out from the tour in which the last 3 dates finally panned out. Then not even a week later it was all cancelled. It sucks, but I'd rather cancel than ever jeopardize someone's health and safety.

Bastian works with local promoters for each of the shows he books, as the success of each show would be dependent on the legwork performed through advertising and everything that would need to occur for each respective local venue. As Bastian noted, the local promoters were also facing major losses:

It sucks completely. Imagine. You book bands, pay fee, flights, hotels, venue rent, and promo. The promoter's job is not easy. Many people see promoters' work as some necessary evil, but many don't realise what kind of risks promoters take every day with investments and how many jobs the promoter provides from security, technicians, crew. My wife Ana speaks daily with a German promoter who lost about 25,000 euro because of a cancelled festival. He had everything paid in advance.

The particular promoter that Bastian referred to had to cancel a concert that was to take place on a boat that took three years to plan due to all the government permissions that were required to host live music in that setting, so that was three years of work that were suddenly lost. To understand how the pandemic was impacting smaller-scale promoters, I interviewed Randy Kastner of RK Metal Promotions, who books and promotes shows and festivals within the U.S. state of Wisconsin. He wasn't facing the same massive losses as larger agencies, but he still had to cancel multiple shows, including the sequel to a music festival that he ran for ten consecutive years. For Randy, working as a promoter was a hobby, whereas for Bastian, his booking agency was his sole source of income and had been his only job over the past thirty years. For Randy, he wasn't as concerned about the concerts he had to cancel as much as he was concerned about how booking shows would be impacted post-pandemic. He predicted that bands everywhere would be eager to return to touring at the same time, which would oversaturate the concert market and cause promoters like him to continue to take losses due to the wider dispersion of concert attendees:

Once things return to a new normal everyone will be on tour making it even harder to break even... Every band will be on a mission to get back out there, but unfortunately, with too many shows and not enough fans, money turnouts will suffer for many shows. Too many shows is never a good thing.

Similar to touring musicians, these booking agents also experienced negative affective consequences following tour cancellations, however, they didn't seem nearly as intense as what touring musicians were experiencing. For example, Mikael Parks, who runs WorldForge Booking & Touring, explained to me:

I'm bummed out. All of my promoter buds, venues, and musician friends are as well. But, I am sure I can speak for most of them when I say that we'd rather cancel/postpone than see anyone suffer because of any irresponsibility during something like this. It's something we are all taking seriously with hopes that everyone comes out on the other side healthy.

Lastly, I wanted to understand how band managers were being impacted by the pandemic. I interviewed Tito Vespasiani who works as a manager for many bands, and he also is an employee at Everlasting Spew Records, an independent Italian record label. Tito explained to me what his job as a band manager entailed:

A manager is in charge of constantly advising a band and leading it through its journey in the music business. This could include a variety of aspects - large scale decisions and actions - looking for a booking agency and negotiating terms, label shopping for example - or even simply coming up with effective ideas to push the band and keep it active and motivated. It could be merch sales and all sort of initiatives. I don't see the manager as something that invisibly controls the band but rather someone who strongly believes in the band and that works as an enhancer of the band's original purpose. The booking agent has the role of looking for shows - talking to either local promoters or tour agencies and negotiating those with them. "The man in the middle" in a few words. When it comes to web promotion I've got my own take on the matter. I don't do classic-approach PR, sending emails for interviews/reviews/magazine coverage in general, although I do shop for premieres for my bands and for my label Everlasting Spew as well. I've built - it took years and it's always expanding - a network of contacts through real and genuine interaction with fans, those who actually listen and buy music and I make sure most of them will at least listen to the bands I care for.

A common solution that managers, booking agencies, and promoters were embracing as concerts and tours continued to be cancelled was to postpone the shows, but Tito warned that further postponements and cancellations might follow since there was no certainty about when the pandemic would end. Further postponements could result in further financial losses. He explained how this impacted all parties involved with his bands:

My main concern is, "what if we reschedule that show and maybe even face some [additional] costs and then lockdowns get prolonged?". Also I had a couple of bands thinking about not releasing new music which was ready [to be released] since while [music consumers were] in fear it would not get the proper attention. Some other bands couldn't finish their

recordings and are afraid that when they take their recordings to go and shop for a label those labels will be swamped with applications. Some bands are being heavily hyped now, but they won't be booked for most fests next year anyways because fests will just replicate this year's cancelled line up, so they should apply for 2022 in hopes that the hype stays alive, but in a year many more albums will come out. It's tricky... I'm afraid the hard work we've put in to build a connection to the public will kind of go wasted, same as the promotional efforts for the albums, if this thing [the pandemic] will keep going for too long. Bands might be able to return playing [live] when hype has faded or tunes feel "old" at that point.

Tito was in a difficult position as a band manager. As he noted, the postponement of musical festivals, which can be crucial to exposing bands to a wider audience and growing their popularity, meant that he would be unable to book many of the bands he manages for many music festivals for at least two full years, which could cause their growth to stagnate. It is crucial for a band to support a new album release with immediate touring due to the fast rate at which music is consumed. Having to wait two full years to give a band greater exposure would likely be too late to promote an album that had been released during the 2020 pandemic. It made it especially difficult for newer, smaller, and growing bands to experience the growth that under normal circumstances would have occurred.

All of these culminating issues would also impact record labels. Tito explained how it impacted the record label he worked for:

As I mentioned before, schedule issues are a real thing already. Many bands were meant to record so there was a certain schedule that will now change unpredictably. I might end up having some empty months with no releases and then two-three packed months with a lot of costs to front all of them in a short span. No live shows also means less promotion and sold copies which also impacts a label. And the most obvious concern is the financial crisis as a whole. It's pretty bad already and if people lose their jobs they won't be able to buy music. Hell, not even me or Giorgio [owner of Everlasting Spew Records] will be able to finance the label. But honestly I'm more concerned for human beings having no income than how this could potentially impact my label, even with it being a crucial component of my life. Things need to be put to scale sometimes.

5. Concluding Thoughts

The COVID-19 pandemic has widely and negatively impacted the global music industry. The year 2020 saw many concert venues face permanent closures, putting the jobs of millions of individuals at risk. Although the financial losses were expected, interviews conducted also indicated that touring musicians were facing psychological hardships. The generosity of

heavy metal music fans helped many bands and music venues combat their financial deficits, however, evidence for emotional support for touring musicians beyond the renewed focus on songwriting was largely not found. The metal music industry has previously shown resilience when facing change (Messick, 2021), but it is hoped that there will be greater attentiveness towards the mental well-being of musicians during and post-pandemic as an additional safeguard. Musicians described the loss of live concerts with powerful language, describing it as making themselves feel incomplete, and that it caused them to experience depressive symptoms and anxiety. Although the extent to which these findings can be generalized is unclear due to the small number of people interviewed, these individuals did come from a variety of global backgrounds, were in bands and agencies of various sizes and ages, and still experienced much overlap in their affective conditions. Perspectives were also drawn to understand how the booking agencies, promoters, and respective managers that work with bands were impacted, and all individuals expressed concern about the lasting effects of the pandemic on the recovery of the music industry. If the views shared here are representative of the widespread experiences of musicians and other individuals in the music industry, then it is likely that the impact of COVID-19 will have both financial and emotional ramifications far beyond the 2020 pandemic. Although this chapter focused on individuals on the business side of the music industry, it is important to note that consumers of music were likely also impacted by the pandemic, so it is hoped that future research can expand by exploring how the lack of live music has affected individuals accustomed to live music as a form of catharsis in their own lives too.

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