

# C1 - Proposal Creation

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Prior to embarking on this postgraduate, one of my biggest struggles in production was to produce music efficiently and skilfully. Throughout the course there has been an immense improvement within my productions, where I have surprised myself with the number of songs produced and their quality. Furthermore, these skills have allowed for an eagerness to develop, where I am constantly pushing and exploring with sound palettes and sound styles. This development has subsequently opened a desire and capability to express myself from a new perspective; where memories and feelings I had suppressed or simply forgotten are submerging and demanding a voice.

The idea of creating a concept album seemed enticing. As of late I have found an eagerness to explore and express these observations and experiences that over the years have been suppressed, misunderstood, or forgotten due to a lack of understanding and-, or acceptance. I have found myself pondering on people's reactions to situations, and how those reactions have unintentionally, or intentionally affected me; and in reverse, how my actions, while not ill intended, might have had a damming effect on others. There has been a sense of growing out of a more sheltered childhood into a world where people are struggling; to then reflect and recognise those struggles from your youth but only now understanding the implications of those actions – and the repercussions it presents today.

Mental health is a growing subject in society, where there is now a broader openness to express one's own struggles and then further accommodate for those struggles (Hassen, 2022). Especially because of the integral part social media has on adolescent's lives', individuals can now exchange and discuss mental health information with a wider audience, thus creating a sense of normalisation related to mental health; individuals whom were previously struggling alone, may now not feel so alone in their struggles (Hassen, 2022).

Furthermore, by educating on mental health, people are becoming more equipped at recognizing patterns and situations that may be a result of a mental health diagnosis, which is a very important step in destigmatising (Rickwood, 2012). Nevertheless, this awareness might unintentionally create a surge of wanted -, and unwanted reflections, especially from one's youth, of untreated and unknown trauma; creating a group of people who are now having to acknowledge and heal wounds they up until now were unaware of. Society is therefore not only having to accommodate for those struggling from mental health diagnosis' due to current situations, but also those with decades of untreated problems (Kaushik, 2016).

However, with the normalisation of mental health struggles arise a misunderstanding regarding what is considered a mental health diagnosis and what is more tied to personality or

extenuating circumstances. With the rise of ‘mental health influencers’, every behaviour is suddenly tied to a mental health diagnosis (KVC Health Systems, 2022). A dangerous preposition, where rather than addressing problematic behaviour in oneself, it is now written off as part of a bigger diagnosis and thus not something necessary to address.

Society finds itself at a crossroad with a surge of acceptance and destigmatising of mental health, undiscovered trauma surfacing because of this openness, a percentage of people unwilling to move with the pace of society and uneducated groups using mental health as something similarly to that of a trend. With these juxtaposing opinions the grey zone of acceptable behaviour surrounding mental health becomes blurred. Especially amongst those who self-diagnose, there is a misunderstanding of what mental health struggles actually entail, resulting in a popular appropriation of a very serious issue (Williams, 2019).

With the normalisation of mental health struggles, I want to dig deeper into what society deems ‘acceptable’ regarding mental health. Growing up in a society where mental health is rarely discussed, and if brought up it is done so behind closed doors and in private, I never fully understood what it meant to be struggling with one’s mental health. The global mental health destigmatising movement is relatively new, and only becoming more apparent in recent years (Rüsch, 2020). Yet, the Norwegian society, was, and is still falling behind, the want for creating openness around the topic is being overshadowed by the need to keep one’s personal life as private as possible (Andvig, 2014). Therefore, although mental health struggles are evidently present in Norwegian society, and I have had several encounters with personal struggles and other people struggling, I never had the knowledge to understand those struggles and how to process them. Resulting in behaviour being passed as acceptable, when in reality it was not; and situations that initially prompted harsh reactions, should have been approached with more understanding and gentleness.

It is only in very recent years, triggered by moving to another country and constantly being challenged in my knowledge, that I have begun to grasp the magnitude and complexity surrounding mental health struggles. The deep-rooted need to keep things private resulted in a misunderstanding and fear when people would express their emotions, where they were automatically written off as unreasonable or rude. Integrating into a society that, although not perfect, prioritise mental health to a much larger degree than what I had previously encountered, inevitably demanded that I learn and change. This change has sprouted a curiosity to dive deeper into the intricacy of mental health in a hope to understand it better. Which in turn has uncovered

struggles within myself in present time, and struggles from earlier youth; as well as a whole new perspective on behaviour and personality.

My biggest field of interest, and main priority for the album is how, in a lot of instances, mental health may explain certain behaviour, but does it excuse it? By combing through memories and situations that I now understand occurred due to someone having mental health struggles, I am left with deciding if that removes the pain their actions caused. A person struggling does most likely not wish to act in a harmful way, yet their actions may still have hurtful consequences for the receiving counterpart. At what point in a person's journey with their mental health struggles does it become an outsider's responsibility to accept certain behaviour? Especially prominent within families, when there is a child struggling mentally, parents may become completely enveloped in their child's mental struggles and unintentionally neglect the needs of their other children (Karp, 2001). Or siblings take on the role of a support system, or act as a safety net for their struggling sibling, which in turn results in them developing mental struggles due to the stress and mental toll of being a caregiver (Hallett, 2017). There is a fine line of when the impact of someone's struggles becomes too much, and, for the sake of one's safety and health, they should walk away from the situation. Yet, when discussing how to cope with a mentally struggling family member, friend or partner, there is a lot of emphasis put on the carer to be gentle, understanding and patient (Hallett, 2017). In the instances where the carers declining mental health is discussed, many papers argue that it is then the carers responsibility to seek out professional help for their struggles so they can be as healthy as possible when interacting with their mentally struggling counterpart (American Psychological Association, 2015). Which is a reasonable argument, but it begs the question of when does the mental toll put on the carer become significant enough that the carer should prioritise themselves, and why should the carer be left to suffer and deal with their mental struggles if the person they're caring for is not doing the same?

With the creation of this album there is a lot of research and carefully crafted sentiments needed. I am not necessarily looking to conclude or have a strong opinion of what is right or wrong, as I do not believe there is one right way to approach mental health. Rather, I want to open the discussion on the intricate consequences mental health has on not only the struggling part, but all those who surround them. I wish to use the album as a catalyst to express and hopefully understand my own experiences better, but also as a means to broaden the understanding of all the complex emotions connected with having mental health struggles and interacting with

someone who struggles. With this comes a responsibility to not undermine the struggles of those who suffer. I must carefully approach how to explore the perspectives of the affected counterparts and their interactions without laying blame or shaming those who do struggle with their mental health. Creating acceptance and awareness around mental health is detrimental in encouraging people to seek help and hopefully understand their struggles better (Rickwood, 2012). Consequentially, without the help of a professional the instances of a person falling victim to their mental illness becomes increasingly higher, which in turn will have a greater impact on those surrounding them (Jamison, 2006). Acceptance is key in ensuring that the negative implications from declining mental health does not affect-, or overwhelm any relations, by giving both parties the right tools to handle situations.

Therefore, it is important to make it understood through the lyrics of the album that, although one might walk away from a relation with someone who struggles, they are doing so from a place of having to prioritise themselves and their health. There will be put emphasis on understanding the position of the person with a mental illness, while allowing the affected to express their frustrations and sadness. Furthermore, put great emphasis on the dangers of co-dependency and how important it is, for both parties, to seek out professional help; a friend or relative should not have to be the only support system for someone with a mental illness, for the sake of their own health.

The album is drafted to include about 12 songs, but as the project develops this number might change. Producing a cohesive concept album in a couple of months requires detailed time-management and flexibility to ensure the quality of each production. Comparing previous projects, I have seen an immense improvement in my creativity and workflow and would not embark on this journey if I did not find it achievable. Nonetheless, circumstances may make it so that the envisioned album is not there, and changes would need to be made. The main focus will be on delivering well-crafted productions, where if necessarily, shortening the album into an EP would be an alternative; then further develop the EP into a full concept album after hand-in.

When taking on such a serious topic the danger of creating a very mellow and sad album is present: and not necessarily something I wish for. Therefore, I will put effort into utilising a wide variety of tempos and instrumentations to have as much differentiation between each song as possible: while employing clear elements that tie them all together. Ideally, the album will be a mix of more upbeat productions and intimate, slower ballads that all seamlessly correlate. Creating discrete and underlying soundscapes will be a constant throughout the album, where

the emphasis will be put on utilizing synths to create complex sounds and melodies. If plausible, the use of live instruments, especially drums and piano would be included but this would be subject to finding instrumentalists and their availability. Nevertheless, I find the correlation between using digital instrumentations with vocals to be very interesting and something I wish to explore further; but the sound palette generated by doing so is not always desirable, where a live recording would be better. From a production perspective, I find it beneficial to produce a song with 'placeholder' instruments and all intended elements before starting a recording process. With this project I will have a similar approach, in order to gauge the number of live recorded elements needed for each song and provide an instrumentalist with all the expected material to be recorded. This way I can better plan the recording sessions, and hopefully, record instrumental parts from several songs in one session; for instance, record the piano for each song over 1 – 2 days, instead of booking a studio every time a new instrument is needed to be recorded.

Being fluent in both English and Norwegian is something I wish to utilise throughout the album. The aim would be to use Norwegian as a means to personalise certain songs and underline more private reflections. Writing songs in Norwegian is not something I have done prior to this project, but as this album is triggered from a place of personal reflections it feels fitting to include the language that these reflections originated in. Ideally, the songs in Norwegian would exist almost as its own entity within the album which tells the story of how the idea of the album came to life. They will explore memories and reflections from earlier youth, and how this has affected me later in life and ultimately led me to wanting to explore those particular feelings in more detail and wishing to expand my knowledge and understanding on mental health in general.

As of now, the theme and idea of the album is quite broad. Fundamentally the album will discuss mental health and its implications, but the gravity of the subject may make the intention and understanding of the album blurred. This early in the process, I do not wish to restrict or only focus on one main theme within the mental health discussion, as I anticipate this would hinder my creativity and create forced sentiments. Although I have created guidelines of topics that I find enticing and want to further explore and prioritise, it is important to not get stuck in those ideas and lose sight of other propositions which may support the album better. Therefore, as the album progress' and it becomes clear what-, and how I wish to convey these intricate relations, I will then decide on the most pressing subthemes and ideas and explore those further and in more depth.

## Project Timeline

| <i>Week</i> | <i>Week ending</i>     | <b>Production</b>                                                                                     | <b>Live recording</b>         | <b>Mix &amp; master</b>         | <b>Other</b>                                           |
|-------------|------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------|
| -13         | 23 <sup>rd</sup> April | Project start – explore with sound pallet and sound ideas                                             | Project start                 | Project start                   | Project start – have a visualised concept              |
| -12         | 30 <sup>th</sup> April | At least 2 productions started                                                                        |                               |                                 |                                                        |
| -11         | 7 <sup>th</sup> May    |                                                                                                       |                               |                                 |                                                        |
| -10         | 14 <sup>th</sup> May   |                                                                                                       |                               |                                 | Project proposal hand in                               |
| -9          | 21 <sup>st</sup> May   |                                                                                                       |                               |                                 | Start reflective commentary                            |
| -8          | 28 <sup>th</sup> May   |                                                                                                       |                               |                                 |                                                        |
| -7          | 4 <sup>th</sup> June   |                                                                                                       | Vocal sessions                |                                 |                                                        |
| -6          | 11 <sup>th</sup> June  |                                                                                                       |                               |                                 |                                                        |
| -5          | 18 <sup>th</sup> June  | Have most of the productions started – majority finished and ready for live recording (if applicable) | Instrumental recording        |                                 | Concept and vision for album needs to be finalised     |
| -4          | 25 <sup>th</sup> June  |                                                                                                       | Instrumental recording        |                                 |                                                        |
| -3          | 2 <sup>nd</sup> July   |                                                                                                       |                               | Mixing                          |                                                        |
| -2          | 9 <sup>th</sup> July   | All productions need to be done and ready for mix and master                                          | Backup instrumental recording |                                 |                                                        |
| -1          | 16 <sup>th</sup> July  |                                                                                                       |                               | Mastering and finishing touches | Reflective commentary done– start editing and revising |
| 0           | 23 <sup>rd</sup> July  | Project hand in                                                                                       |                               |                                 | Supporting essay hand in                               |

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