



How to Build a Solo Career in The Music Industry?

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ABSTRACT

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Building a solo career in the modern music industry is a highly popular and competitive business, which lacks clear guidance in achieving a successful solo career. The purpose of this thesis was to give an overview and guidance on how to build a solo career in the music industry. The thesis researched why certain individuals become professional solo artists and how they pursue and sustain their careers. The goal of this study was to find different methods for musicians to build a career as solo artists. As the research method, professional artists were interviewed to gather qualitative data. In addition to the interviews, the material was gathered from books and articles related to the music industry, music business, and functional medicine.

The results indicated building a solo career is a lifelong process, a lifestyle, and a calling for the profession. According to the results, becoming a musician and a solo artist is a matter of being highly intrigued by music and having the urge to implement one's vision autonomously through music.

The conclusion indicates that certain individuals have become musicians because of influences from their lives. To gain success and remain relevant in the music industry, solo artists were required to update their music, marketing methods, and image constantly. The findings could be developed further into more detailed steps as a guide for building a solo career in the music industry.

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GLOSSARY

Alter-character / Alter-ego – The character the artist is in public and on stage.

Playback – Recorded track of a certain piece of music that is playing in the background while the vocals are implemented live on top of the track. This is usually used on live shows and TV shows.

Backtrack – A recorded track of a certain piece of music with instrumental parts playing in the background during the artist's live show. This is used with the band.

Mastering – The final procedure to finalize a song or an album in the right format, setting fade-ins and fade-out, setting the length of the breaks between songs in an album. After mastering the material is sent to the record label and the distributors.

FOH sound engineer – Front-of-house sound engineer mixes the output sound at live shows.

Public Relations person – The Public Relations person is called a Promoter as well and they take care of the public relations and promotion of the artist's music and live shows. There are three kinds of promoters: Public Relations promoters, Album Release promoters, and Live event promoters.

Manager – The manager makes the deals for the artist. They have acquired knowledge of the legal aspects and connections in the music business to give valuable career advice to the artist and help the artist gain success.

Playlisting – Radios and Streaming Services promote artists' songs by playing them in their playlists.

1 INTRODUCTION

How to build a solo career is a challenging question because of the complexity of implementing the profession. Building a solo career involves multiple factors and life events, that influence an individual to become a musician and an artist. Being a solo artist is not just a profession, it is a lifestyle and part of one's identity. It is a commitment on a deeper level, which no one else understands better than an artist themselves. To be able to answer the question of how to build a solo career, we must have an understanding of the deeper levels of a solo artist.

This study introduces the reasons and consequences of how an individual turns out to be a solo artist, what are the practicalities of building a solo career, and what are the key factors for maintaining the profession and gaining success. Questions such as what influences the artist had in their childhood, who were the most influential people in their life, and what kind of environment they grew up in, help to understand the fundamental reasons for choosing the career path of a solo artist. The study presents how artists come from different childhood premises and still have common influences impacting them becoming solo artists. There are various ways to build a solo career but what are they? What does it require to be a solo artist? How to build a solo career and stay relevant in the music industry? How to gain success? What are the sacrifices and warnings?

In the modern music industry, the competition to stand out is more challenging than ever. The artist is the product, and the artist must sell their personality and image to the public alongside their music. Social media has become the most important marketing tool for the artist, and it has become part of their daily work. What does this involve and require from the artist? Building a solo career is a demanding profession, and there are multiple ways to reach the set career goals.

What types of solo artists are there and is it possible to be a solo artist while being in a band? There are solo artists who have always wanted to be solo artists and implement their own vision. What does it require to be an autonomous artist? Some artists have started as band members or remain in a band. What are the challenges and benefits of being in two projects? Solo artists who build their careers by working for the record label are *label artists*, and they usually implement

the record label's vision of the artist. There are solo artists who are working with the record label and implementing their vision. This thesis concentrates on solo artists who work with labels as independent solo artists.

For solo artists, it is important to acknowledge who they are, what they want, why they want it, and when they want it. At the same time, they must take care of themselves mentally and physically, not to forget their personal life. To pursue a career as a solo artist it is essential to understand what the profession demands and not to forget their true self along the way.

One can learn to do things in different ways from the experiences they get but I have not seen any major change in my identity. I have always been myself and have not pretended to be someone else, and that has been a key factor in things going well. (Sani 2022.)

This is a lifestyle, rather than a job, and if you are not in the industry, it is quite impossible to understand what this job includes. Keeping up the "flame" in this job is important. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Success to me is to make a living financially, and the fact that people would want to hear my music, the new music as well. I want to be able to tour with my music around Finland. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

I am the one making all the deals, the band is about my solo career, and I have a good record company behind me. When things happen, they happen to me. In a democratic band, equality is more equal, and the decisions are done together. I prefer a gentle monarch rather than an unfunctional democracy. (Läntinen 2022.)

2 INTRODUCTION OF THE INTERVIEWEES

2.1. Tommi Läntinen

Tommi Läntinen, 64, is a Finnish rock and pop artist. He has a long history of being part of the Finnish music industry. He has made a 40-year-long career singing mostly as a solo artist, but also as a band member of *Boycott* and *Fabriks* and taking part in different productions since the beginning of his career.

He is nationally known for his several hit songs such as *Via Dolorosa* and *Syvälle Sydämeen sattuu*. His experience as a band member started in 1979 when he started in *Fabriks*. He has made an international career known for his band *Boycott* and the song *Gotta Rock*. In their active years, they toured around the United States of America and recorded an album there. They also gained quite the success in Finland, Sweden, and especially in the Soviet Union (Russia).

Läntinen is considered one of the legendary Finnish artists in Finland's music industry. At the moment he is working as an artist at *Vallila Music House*, and *Gabi Hakanen* as his manager. Hakanen is best known from being the manager of the band *Haloo Helsinki*. (Läntinen 2022.)



PICTURE 1. Tommi Läntinen, Solo Artist (Marek Sabogal 2023)

2.2. JP Leppäluoto

JP (Jussi-Pekka) Leppäluoto, 48, is a Finnish rock, pop and heavy metal artist. He has been involved with a heavy metal band *Charon*, *Harmaja*, *Raskasta Joulua*, and later he established his own solo band. He has an interesting background as a hard-working man and a man with a mission.

Leppäluoto's history in the music business includes a wide scale of being part of several areas in culture. He used to be an actor in Finland's Music Theatre, working at radio stations, being a band member of several bands, and building up his career by acoustic shows. Now he continues touring with his own solo band *JP Leppäluoto*. He was recently hired as one of the vocalists in a Finnish TV-show *Elämäni Biisi*, which has been a success. (Leppäluoto 2022.)



PICTURE 3. JP Leppäluoto, Solo Artist (Robert Frankó 2019)

2.3. Erja Lyytinen

Erja Lyytinen, 47, is a Finnish blues guitarist and a solo artist. In her 20-year career, she has made her way by herself from the beginning, and she is titled as one of the best blues guitarists in the world. She does tours around the world but mainly in Europe and Finland. She is her own manager and has a production team behind her to make her dreams come true. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Erja is a good example of an artist with the mind of an entrepreneur. She has a personality with organizing and managing skills, and at the same time, she is an extraordinarily gifted blues guitarist. Her growth story inspires to develop, learn, and pursue the goals to become an artist, especially a self-managing artist. (Lyytinen 2022.)



PICTURE 3. Erja Lyytinen, Solo artist, Blues Guitarist and Singer (Elsa Wellamo 2023)

2.4. Sani

Sani (Saija Aartela) 52, is a pop singer, and the 90s disco queen of Finland. She is known best for the band *AIKAKONE*, which was one of the biggest hit bands from the 90s to the beginning of 2000 in Finland. The band is still a big thing in Finland, and they have a lot of shows around in Finland. For decades their music and Sani's voice have melted the hearts of Finnish people.

Aside from the band Sani has been doing her solo career and making her solo music for years. She has made many appearances as an actress in summer musicals, musicals, and theaters. She is a reality TV star in Finland and has taken part in TV shows such as *Big Brother*, *Vain Elämää*, *Farmi*, and *Rantabaari*. Sani is one the most hardworking innovational businesswomen in Finland and in the music business. She has always been managing her own career and pursuing her goals enthusiastically. (Sani 2022.)



PICTURE 4. Sani, Solo Artist and the singer of *AIKAKONE* (Mari Manninen 2023)

3 SOLO ARTISTS IN HISTORY

The common thing for all solo artists is their own vision of their art, and their will to implement it on their own terms. Alongside their careers, they have a huge impact on their audiences and even the attitudes of the societies. By their actions and words, they can change the world. There have been solo artists since the beginning of the 20th century changing the world by their art and existence. (Savethemusic.org)

Ella Fitzgerald, a jazz singer, was the first black female solo artist to pave the way for other black artists in her time when racism was at its worst in the 1920s to 1950s. Janis Joplin, a blues and rock singer, changed the beauty trends and attitudes with her outrageous courage, feminist values, and natural look in the 1960s. Bruce Dickinson, since the 1980s, has been one of the most successful heavy metal singers in the world known for the band Iron Maiden, and his own solo career. As a multi-talent, innovative entrepreneur in different fields of expertise, and as a pilot amongst other things he does in his life, he has changed the concept of being an artist. He is an artist of life. These artists are just a few examples of solo artists who could bend the rules, the attitudes, and the concepts in the world.

3.1. Ella Fitzgerald

Ella Jane Fitzgerald was born in 1917, in Newport News, Virginia. She was the most famous jazz singer in the United States of America for more than half a century. She grew up with her mother, stepfather, and stepsister. Her life changed permanently when her family died, and she got depressed and lonely. After getting in trouble with the police, she was taken into custody. Her life took a turn when she escaped her caretakers and started participating in talent competitions. She wanted to become a dancer but when she started to sing the crowd was immediately hers. She was a naturally gifted singer from a young age and was good at imitating other instruments, and later she made scat-singing her brand.

She made her first recording in 1936 under the Decca label. She met a drummer and the bandleader Chick Webb, who took her singing into his band and under his wing. He introduced her to the people in the music business. She had been a singer in several bands when she met her future husband, bassist Ray Brown, who was working for Norman Granz at the Jazz at the Philharmonic, and she got a chance to tour with them. As an artist, she overcame racial discrimination, toured around the world, and was admired by millions of fans, Hollywood stars, and colleagues in the music industry. She won several trophies for her accomplishments, and she recorded over 200 albums. In 1991 she did her last show in New York and died in 1996 in her Beverly Hills home. (Ella Fitzgerald.com.)



PICTURE 5. Ella Fitzgerald, A Jazz singer (Gilles Petard, Redferns, Getty Images 1940)

3.2. Janis Joplin

Janis Joplin was an American blues and rock singer, who was born in 1943 in Port Arthur, Texas, U.S. She grew up in a middle-class family, struggled in her childhood, and dropped out of school in 1963 to become a folk and blues singer. (Britannica.com.) In 1967 the white rock world had never seen or heard anything like Janis when she entered the stage with the band *Big Brother* at the music event Monterey Pop. In her performance, she was sexually open, swore a lot, and dressed psychedelic and bold. After her fierce appearance at the event, she was described as a strong and very different artist, a force of nature. Her vast

growth into a huge rockstar was an indication that America was putting its strict post-war class rules aside.

Janis could not change the sexist attitudes of her time, but she paved the way for future female artists. She changed the beauty ideals and was an example of liberating women from make-up, corsets, and bras. She refused to follow the rules she was brought up to. She supported black artists such as Etta James, who was her biggest idol. She overdosed accidentally on heroin in 1970, and not long after her passing her music stopped playing on radios. The legacy of her style has still influenced a lot of artists to this day. (Echols 1999, 16-18.)



PICTURE 6. Janis Joplin, blues rock singer in 1960s (Britannica.com)

3.3. Bruce Dickinson

Bruce Dickinson is a British heavy metal singer and songwriter, born in 1954 in Worksop, Nottinghamshire, England. He is best known as the lead singer of one of the most successful heavy metal bands Iron Maiden and his own solo career since the 1980s. After moving to Sheffield in his teenage years he started as a drummer but after it did not work out for him, he started to sing in different local bands. He was the singer of Samson and after leaving the band in 1981, he ended up as the new lead singer of Iron Maiden the same year after the previous singer had left the band. Dickinson left the band in 1993 to pursue his solo career. He

made his debut album *Tattooed Millionaire* in 1990. He returned to Iron Maiden in 1999 and the band as his priority again they gained shows with packed arenas and their success has been undeniable since. Alongside his music career Dickinson is an entrepreneur, scriptwriter, avid fencer, author, hosted U.K. radio shows, and is a certified airplane pilot. (Allmusic.com.)



PICTURE 7. Bruce Dickinson, the Singer of Iron Maiden, Entrepreneur (Nidhal Marzouk/Courtesy of the artist 2021)

4 INFLUENCES FOR AN ARTIST

To become a solo artist is a combination of different influences in life. They start from childhood when the parents give the first examples of playing and listening to music. The encouragement toward music and possibly a career as a musician is more likely, when either or both parents are musicians. But it is not necessary. The social life of having friends interested in music supports the idea of the social benefits to be gained through a common hobby and interest. (Lyytinen 2022.)

The hobbies that involve music help an individual express themselves and their feelings in a safe way. The school and the living environment can offer circumstances and the possibility of playing and listening to music outside the home environment. Before the artist becomes a full-day musician, the artist might have a working history of professions other than music, in most cases working in the music industry as a side job. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

4.1. Childhood Experiences

The first influences to become a solo artist come from childhood. The parents, the family dynamics, and the culture in the family affect a lot of young people's identity and desire to pursue their goals in life. Music as a profession or a hobby of the parents or a parent is the first example to a growing child. Having a parent as a musician or them listening to a lot of music, and going to concerts, is encouraging the child toward music. There is a big difference between healthy encouragement and enforcement. In a family where the parents are musicians and give the opportunity to choose music freely, helps create a healthy relationship with music. When the child is genuinely interested in music, it is easily observed at an early age. (Lyytinen 2022.)

In some cases, the parents have their child begin a hobby with a certain instrument. The child might not be as enthusiastic about the instrument as the parents would hope. Nevertheless, the child can start to like the instrument later. In the end, one has a will of their own, and they will get drawn to the instrument they truly are intrigued by, like the electric guitar or singing.

It was a very natural environment to grow up for a young musician (Lyytinen 2022).

Lyytinen's parents were musicians, and they had a band together. Her mother played the bass, and through leading and managing the band, she booked and organized all the shows. Later, the whole family used to play and sing music together as a band at every family occasion. Her parents used to listen and play music at home, and there they had all the basic instruments available. Lyytinen's experience as she grew up in a natural environment for a young musician was encouraging her to become a musician. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Growing up in a big family includes many challenges and at the same time creates an environment for developing one's social skills for the future. Being a member of many siblings and competing for attention prepares the person for competition in the music business. Lääntinen was born in a family of 6 siblings, and he was the firstborn. Growing up in a big family caused him a hectic growing environment. He could not practice his music as a hobby at home, so he used to go to his friend's house where he had the opportunity to listen and play music as much as he wanted. (Lääntinen 2022.)

The music industry is considered a highly competitive business and requires immense social skills to bring out one's best performance under pressure. This is why playing music together with family members, especially with siblings, brings out the competitive character trait. It also encourages the siblings to develop themselves and to bring their relationship closer to each other. By constantly challenging each other the siblings unconsciously prepare themselves for the future. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Lyytinen grew up with two brothers developing her skills as a musician. They used to play together with their parents at different family events throughout their childhood. She learned how to collaborate with the opposite gender and has found it extremely useful in the male-dominated music industry. Growing up with brothers, she believes is the reason she has always got along with male colleagues in the music business. (Lyytinen 2022.)

A parent supports their child getting into music in different ways, such as being an example and taking the kid to the band rehearsals. A huge impact happens in a split of a moment when the child hears a certain instrument, a song, or a sound. At a young age, a person is sensitive to different influences. Leppäluoto's father was a musician who toured around Finland as a troubadour. One day he took his son to his rehearsal room and Leppäluoto heard a drummer playing for the first time. He got a tremendous feeling of excitement hearing and feeling the beat of the drums. Later the sound of an electric guitar made the biggest impact on him. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

4.2. Music Oriented Education

Education at school starts at a very young age and the influences from teachers, the learning environment, and schoolmates can support the career choice to become an artist. A teacher can have a huge impact on the student's inspiration to pursue a particular hobby or profession. When a teacher introduces an instrument in an inspirational way to try different instruments or a certain instrument, it encourages the child to get excited about playing or singing music. (Läntinen 2022.)

When Läntinen was about nine years old, he was interested in music and different instruments. He played the trumpet which was introduced to him by his third-grade teacher before he began to solely focus on singing. He continued playing the trumpet for the next 6 years. (Läntinen 2022.)

It is quite rare to have a clear vision at a young age of which instrument feels the most comfortable to play. In Lyytinen's case, she started with the violin at the age of seven and when she was 14, she changed her main instrument to the electric guitar. She had been intrigued by rock music and played the electric guitar since she was a child. Back then, there were no rock schools for learning how to play the electric guitar. She got her first electric guitar lessons from her first idol, her father. She went to study at Kuopio Pop Jazz Conservatory and later graduated as the music director. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Studying at different music-oriented schools leads to finding an interest in certain fields of music and a possible future career. Having a history of wide experience in music institutions develops and gives great acquirements to pursue musicianship. In Sani's case, she started singing in first grade, and in the fourth grade, she went to study playing piano at the. She was seventeen years old when she went to study classical singing at the Music College of Hämeenlinna. Her study path continued to the Music Institution of Orivesi, where she could sing pop and jazz music and learn more about different genres of music. (Sani 2022.)

4.3. Friend and Family Relations

Friends with a common interest in music create a safe social circle and help the person to develop their musical skills amongst same-spirited people. It creates an experience of belonging to a certain group of people and gives confidence in pursuing a career as a musician. Läntinen met his first bandmate at a football yard when he had moved closer to where Läntinen was living. They started a band together and used to go to listen and play rock music at his friend's home. Granted by his friend's parents, they were allowed to play in their garage as loud as they wanted, and as long as they wanted. The possibility of enjoying music to such an extent Läntinen's vision of becoming a musician got more confirmed. (Läntinen 2022.)

Family members can be bandmates and finding other friends with common interest encourage young musicians to pursue playing the instrument they are interested in. Lyytinen used to play music with her family at every family event they took part in. When she started rehearsing playing guitar, she found friends who had a common interest in playing guitar, and they rehearsed together as a group. (Lyytinen 2022.)

To get the first experience as a band member can happen at a very young age with friends. Having the environment, using imagination, and having friends who are as excited about the band, can give the first kick toward becoming an artist.

Leppäluoto was ten years old when he started to try out a band in the fifth grade. They used to play in the basement, and they arranged a gig for their other friends. They made fake tickets that they shared and asked the other kids to show them by the door on their way to the gig. Leppäluoto was supposed to be the singer of the band, but he got nervous just before the show and switched places with the drummer. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

Having friends develops the artist's social skills from an early age, and they help realize what one is talented at and what their future occupation could be. Often, the moment of a big revolution happens in unexpected situations.

Leppäluoto was sixteen years old when he started singing with more ambitious goals. He used to sing while his friend, was playing the piano. They always went to his friend's home to have music sessions. Still, Leppäluoto did not think of himself as a singer, because he was extremely sensitive about it. The revolutionary moment happened when they were driving around, listening to music in the car and Leppäluoto sang along to *Eppu Normaali's* music. His friend told Leppäluoto sounded better than the original singer. That was the moment he figured he could sing more. Not for long, they established their first band together and gathered different instruments at his friend's home. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

4.4. Hobbies Support Self-expression and Musical Identity

Gathering experience from different hobbies supports the artist in finding ways to express oneself and consider possible career paths. Particularly in music, one might try various instruments before they find their own instrument (Läntinen 2022.) In some cases, the right instrument is found naturally and without effort. Listening to music has a big influence on the orientation of one's taste in music. By listening, and searching for new artists and bands, one finds idols to follow and look up to.

Läntinen's first instrument was trumpet for six years and he played it until he got in the Army Orchestra. Since he was a child, he used to sing all the time and loved to perform, especially at family and school events. In his early teenage years, he ended up singing in a band, he had established with his childhood

friend. They used to play in the basement, and they took influences from bands such as *Bad Company*, *Tendency*, and *Eagles*. (Läntinen 2022.)

Lyytinen played the violin from the age of seven to thirteen in a Music Conservatory. She was interested in playing the guitar, especially the electric guitar, and applied to the Conservatory for a classic guitar study line as her second instrument. She failed in her attempt to get in but her interest in the electric guitar was maintained. She started to practice independently at home, with the help of her father. He was teaching her the basics and then she continued rehearsing with her group of friends, who had a common interest in playing the electric guitar. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Singing at public events, choirs, and bands from a young age encourages one to pursue a career as a singer. Sani's first appearance as a singer was at a public event when she was in her first grade. She used to sing in choirs and went on to study classical singing, as well as pop/jazz singing. Later she established her first band, with her schoolmates and had her first experience performing with a band. (Sani 2022.)

4.5. Work History

The work history of an artist develops one's skills in the music industry. Gaining experience in different fields of music gives perspective and life experience that can be useful in becoming an artist. Working in a band before a solo career helps to understand ways to collaborate in a group and develops social skills. At the same time, working in a band can clarify the vision of a solo career and develop the skills to be a band leader. In some cases, the solo career has started after several active years in a band or while being a band member. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

Some artists are solo artists, to begin with, and they have a strong vision of themselves as artists since the beginning of their careers. Läntinen has been a solo artist since the beginning of his career. He was in a couple of bands as a member, but ultimately, he went back to his solo career. Läntinen has been a natural band leader since his first band and has the social skills of a gentle but firm leader. He

has always been the one to present difficult issues to the band members and has never felt intimidated by it. (Läntinen 2022.)

4.6. Life Experiences

Besides the influences that have been mentioned earlier, there are other life experiences that influenced the interviewed artists to become solo artists. The artists meet people from the music industry in different phases of their lives and create new relations that inspire, motivate, and develop their career choice or their current solo career. (Sani 2022.)

When Läntinen joined the army orchestra, he found a drummer with a common interest in music. They did some collaboration in music but did not develop further. Later Läntinen found a friend who helped him to establish his solo band. (Läntinen 2022.) Lyytinen was in a relationship with a musician, and they established a company and did live shows together (Lyytinen 2022). Sani was in her last year of studying when she ended up in the advertising industry, singing vocals at Rauli Eskolin's studio. Eskolin introduced her to the production manager of *BMG Music Finland*, Asko Kallonen, who asked Sani to consider joining the band *AIKAKONE*. (Sani 2022.) Leppäluoto worked in several bands, radio stations, and a Finnish music theatre *Musiikkiteatteri*, and started making troubadour gigs and acoustic appearances. His solo career started developing besides appearances as a troubadour and when he started making his own music. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

4.7. Idols

In fact, learning by imitation is one of the most natural ways that musicians build skills. It's wired into us as human beings from our earliest childhood (wwwbw.com.)

Whether we call them idols or role models, they are important for young musicians in their development. An idol is a reason to set certain standards, and goals on what kind of artist the young musician wants to become in the future. An idol is the source of inspiration to rehearse and develop oneself to become as great

as their idol or even greater. Idols are role models in behavior and the young musician will take every possible influence from them including their look, sound, and music. (Wwbw.com.)

There are many forms of an idol who can be a parent, a sibling, a teacher, a friend, another artist, or a band. The common thing is that they all inspire the young musician to become better at what they are doing and work hard for it. The idol is someone to whom the young musician identifies and feels the most connected. The imitating phase is natural and starts from a young age in childhood. By imitating their idol, it develops the young musician's skills and helps them find their own way to express themselves as an artist. One can have many idols at the same time, and it is common for a musician to have different idols influencing them. (Wwbw.com.)

Läntinen considers the artist *Alice Cooper* as his idol. He identifies with Cooper because of his similar background of problems with alcohol and the balance between private and public identity. *Yngwie Malmsteen* was the first idol as a solo guitarist in rock music for Lyytinen.

5 ARTIST LIFE AND BUSINESS

An artist must always be prepared to act. The life of an artist is constant work, which means from the beginning of a day to the point they go to sleep, they must plan their schedule to support their goals. Everything the artist does prepares them for the next move in their career. (Kennedy-center.org.) Their nutrition, and physical and mental healthcare are the main priorities to support artists' daily life while working. To have a balanced life, the artist must have a balance between their private and professional life. This means they have enough time to spend in their private life. During the time of relaxing the artist gains energy from social and non-social activities, they do things they have not been able to do while working. This free time is referred to as recovery as well and it is very important to have. Otherwise, the energy levels get low, and the artist's work starts to suffer. (Saari 2015, 199-200.)

Balancing between private life and being a performing artist is a challenging combination. One must be careful what information they give to the media. Of course, the media is always more interested in the private life of an artist. It is the artist's and their close circle's responsibility to protect the artist's privacy. (Läntinen 2022.) Being an artist and maintaining relevance in the music business requires hard work and sacrifices in personal and business life. Sacrifices are not easy to make, but they are necessary to develop the career of the artist. Artists are sensitive personalities, but at the same time, they have a strong vision of their art and goals. (Lyytinen 2022.)

5.1. The Artist Identity and Private Identity

There is Tommi Läntinen and then there is Tommi. In my perspective, Tommi Läntinen, even if it is my own name, is the stage personality and the entertainer. Tommi is private. It helps me to think that Tommi Läntinen as a character goes on stage to put on the show. (Läntinen 2022.)

Solo artists have an artist identity, which they use to perform better. The artist's identity is seen on stage and in public, and it displays the social side and the

image of the artist. On some occasions, an artist creates an identity to compensate for their lack of confidence and help them to be more social when there are situations that demand a highly extroverted personality. To perform better on stage the artist can rely on their artist identity to deal with any kind of challenging situation that requires bold, self-confident, or even outrageous behavior. The artist's public image is important to further increase their value in the music industry. (medium.com) This is why the artist uses the artist's identity to appear more confident and fluent in conversations, for instance at social events, press conferences, and meeting the fans. (Läntinen 2022.)

5.2. The Artist's Vision and Goal

In a weird way, since I was a kid, I have had a feeling as if I had a certain task in life. But I still do not know if I have one (Läntinen 2022).

To be a successful solo artist, one must have a clear vision of their art and what they want to accomplish as an artist. The artist's vision appears in various forms, and it develops over time. The most important part of the artist's vision is the form of music, how it sounds, and what it makes the listener feel. Another part is the visuality – How the artist looks, what kind of visual effects and graphics are used in a live show, and how they merge. The artist's thoughts and values are important as well because the fans and followers relate to those. Everything the artist says and does in public is being criticized. (Lyytinen 2022.)

Lyytinen has a clear vision of herself as an artist. She is a blues guitarist and a blues singer. She wants to make her own music in her own way and on her own terms. Blues is the style of music that has always been the most intriguing to her. Lyytinen wants to make music with high quality and keep the standards high. (Lyytinen 2022.)

The main goal for the artist in some cases is to become one of the most successful singers in their country. To achieve this goal, they have small milestones leading to the main goal. By doing live shows, releasing new music, making TV appearances, and finding the right people around to promote their careers. The

artist's goals change over the years, depending on what has been achieved. It is a continuous path with numerous goals on the way. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

I want to be a famous singer and a star. Not in the whole world, but in Finland. I want to be famous enough to support my living and do this for years. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

5.3. Self-criticism

A solo artist must be able to evaluate their work from an objective perspective to develop themselves. Self-criticism is an important factor in goal progress and motivation. To be able to evaluate oneself with constructive criticism it is important to observe the facts and not the assumptions. The facts of the accomplished goals have a positively motivating impact, and the goal progress is more likely. A University Study on *Self-criticism, motivation, and goal progress of athletes and musicians* suggests that self-criticism compromises the goal progress and has a negative impact on self-concordant motivation. A musician's performance-oriented goals set certain stress and self-critic lowers their self-esteem. (Sciencedirect.com.)

Self-esteem: Self-esteem refers to "global feelings of self-worth, or a generalized feeling of self-acceptance, goodness, worthiness, and self-respect" (Crocker & Major 1989, 609).

5.4. Sacrifices

Sacrifices are necessary to achieve the goals and to develop the artist's professional career. The decisions affect their personal life as well. The sacrifices often involve changes in human relations and habits in life. It is hard to make the decisions and fulfill them, and it can take years to put them into effect. Sometimes resigning an agent to develop one's career is a mandatory decision to gain more success, bigger shows, and better connections. If there is personal connection with the agent, resigning is more challenging, and it can affect the relationship

once and for all. Depending on how the artist or whoever deals with it, the relationship can continue on a personal level in a friendly term. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

When I started to go toward my solo career, I knew I needed bigger shows and connections, and I knew she did not have those, so I had to let her go (Leppäluoto 2022).

A band can be successful for years and everyone in the band are motivated to continue pursuing global success together. For many reasons, the motivation might disappear, and then the wise decision is to end the band and continue other projects. This happened to Leppäluoto's band *Charon* when they decided to end the band. They did not see a future for the band anymore after 15 years of active touring and making music. Ultimately the decision to end the band led Leppäluoto toward his solo career, and so it is fair to assume it was necessary to happen considering his personal career. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

The saddest thing for me was when we ended the band, Charon. We realized that it was going nowhere (Leppäluoto 2022).

The events in the music industry always involve social interactions, alcohol, and other pleasure substances. For many, it is made to believe that to achieve success one must go to all the events, make new contacts, and use pleasure substances. The necessity to go to the events is true to make new contacts and maintain the existing ones. It is not necessary to use alcohol or other substances during these social interactions. Changing life habits into better ones affect positively the artist's social life, health, and ability to implement their art. (Läntinen 2022.)

Getting sober has affected me the most. I realized that if I want to write something it does not have to be anything mystic or cryptic. Accepting myself, and the fact that all I can do is my best, as long as it carries out. (Läntinen 2022.)

Läntinen was highly famous and successful in his younger years as the singer of *Boycott* and his own solo career. He was invited to all the events and parties, and he went along. After decades of being in the middle of the music business and its

events, he realized alcoholism had become a strong part of his life. He did not like himself under the influence of alcohol anymore, it had done enough damage to his career and personal life. He quit alcohol and smoking in his fifties and swears it was the best decision of his life. (Läntinen 2022.)

5.5. Continuum of a Solo Career

The continuum of a solo career presumes constant forgoing actions and decisions. This process continues throughout the artist's whole career. The artist must update their music and image to keep up with the trends or hold on to their style and find a way to keep it relevant in the music industry. Being active in social media is the most important promotional act in the modern music industry. Social media can be used for advertising the shows and products but also for keeping in contact with the fans. Different appearances in TV shows and festivals are promotional opportunities the artist should use wisely and as often as possible, giving the impression of being relevant in the music industry. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

In the modern music industry getting artist's songs to radio playlists and streaming services' playlists is the most valuable promotion for solo artists. If the artist's song gets to be played many times on the radio, the song will be a hit and eventually gain profit for the artist and their collaborators, such as the record label. An artist must keep working and promoting their music constantly through different platforms. The key to having a continuous solo career is releasing music and touring around without long breaks in between. Touring involves different venues, from pubs to nightclubs and churches, and there are always different audiences to entertain. (Sani 2022.)

Working without taking a break at all, constantly promoting the music in that way. It is a continuum, not letting the engine get cold. Otherwise, it will get cold. (Sani 2022.)

5.6. Music Business

The music business is the profit-oriented and non-artistic side of the music industry. Its main goal is to make as much capital as possible in any way possible. The product is the artist, and when the artist makes the money flow, everyone in the business is interested. To thrive in the music business, one is required to have the qualities of a calculating business mind, great social skills, and legal knowledge of the entertainment industry. To make more profit, bold and outrageous ideas are required from the people working for the artist. Such people are usually entertainer lawyers and managers, who work most commonly together for the artist. It is useful for the artist to be interested in the music business as well, especially the legal aspect. When the artist knows what kind of deal they should sign or what is the current situation in the music industry, they make better decisions. It is a challenge for an artist to balance between following their ambition as an artist and dealing with the businesspeople. (Passman, 2019.)

To get into the music business the artist or their presenter must have useful connections and intelligence to use them wisely. All the connections from small entrepreneurs to big record labels and other possible collaborators are as important. Everyone the artist has ever met or worked with is part of the web of connections the artist might find useful in the future. When the artist finds a manager, music producer, CEO of a record label, or promoter who is great to work with and trustworthy, they are priceless connections. (Sani 2022.)

A solo artist must be able to run their career as a company and be able to think of themselves as the product. The product is not only the music, but it is the personality of the artist as well. It is important to have a clear vision of what the artist wants to sell and how to sell it. (Leppäluoto 2022.)

Lyytinen has always been managing her own company and her band. She has inherited a personality from her mother with strong skills in organizing and managing multiple tasks at the same time. In her perspective, if someone is hired to manage her career and production, this person should know all aspects and the

details of running her company. She believes it is not possible for anyone else to manage her company than herself. (Lyytinen 2022.)

5.7. Business Plan

Making a Business Plan for a solo artist's career helps to clarify their goals and the strategies to be used on the way to the goals. Everything starts with a product that is easy to sell and promote. Figuring out who is the audience, what the goals are, and why the artist wants to be an artist, makes the plan easier to gather. (Thimble.com)

CONTENT OF A BUSINESS PLAN FOR AN ARTIST

- A short biography and mission statement:
Information about the artist and what they are trying to accomplish.
- Synopsis of the business plan.
- Analysis of what kind of target audience the artist would have.
- SWOT Analysis to clarify the artist's strengths and weaknesses.
- Plan for marketing the artist and their products.
- Budget plan for everything considering the artist's career.
- Analytics of success to improve the quality of various areas of the artist's career.

PICTURE 8. A list of the main components of a business plan for a solo artist (Thimble.com)

It is hard for an artist to put their career into a business plan because their career evolves by their actions over the years. Sometimes the plan does not work out the way the outcome was expected, and then the strategy should be changed. One must try different approaches and get different points of view from time to time. (Lyytinen 2022.)

5.8. Team

Every professional solo artist has a team to support their career, which consists of three different teams: a studio production team, a music release team, and a live production team. The combination of these three teams creates a sufficient team to support the artist in achieving the wanted goal. The studio team works together with the artist from pre-production to the final *master* version. The music release team plans the marketing, releasing, and distribution of the music. The live production team plan, design and implement the live production together with the artist. When the artist creates congenial collaborators and team members, they use their services for years. (Sani 2022.)

5.8.1 Studio Production Team

The artist's studio production team includes a music producer, songwriters, musicians, a mixing engineer, and a mastering engineer, and they all must work together fluently during the whole process of making an album (Sani 2022).

To achieve a high-quality final version of the song or an album in time, and within budget, there must be a music producer, who understands and is able to effectuate the artist's vision and sound. There are different professional music producers for different artists, who know how to produce the music and vocals, bringing out the best performance out of the artist. A good music producer has the social and technical skills to work and communicate with the artist and everyone on the team. The producer takes care of the whole project, ensuring that it is operated on time and on budget. (Online.berklee.edu.)

5.8.2 Music Release Team

When the artist's music is to be released, it is very common to have a team including a record label, a public relations person (a promoter), a distributor, and a social media producer (Sani 2022). An artist might have a manager as well, but some artists are self-managed. Depending on the budget and the scale of the

artist's promotion, it is possible to increase the promotion by using a media house and having advertisement campaigns on social media (Lyytinen 2022). The promoter introduces and offers the music to radio stations, media, and TV shows. (Sani 2022.)

The record label together, with the manager and the artist, makes the record deal, plans, and agrees the schedule with the team. The process includes a schedule plan for the promotion, distribution, and release date of the music. This process requires efficient communication and organizing skills between the team members. (Läntinen 2022.)

A public relations person or a promoter is the one to take care of the artist's promotion. The promoter does the promotion as a project or a certain period. The promoter uses their contacts to have the artist appear in the media as much as possible. Usually, the promoter acquires interviews with different magazines, radio stations, and TV shows. (Sani 2022.)

My Promoter is an old-school promoter, who wants to do his business face-to-face with all the collaborators and take the music to the radio and to the media through conversations with them before and after the release. He wants to sustain the connections for the future. (Sani 2022.)

The manager is the person who has the social skills and all the connections required to develop further the career of the artist. This person is responsible for taking care of the artist's career, image, and benefits. They negotiate the best deals, make the needed legal actions, plan strategies for building up the artist's career, take care of the needed insurance, and are in contact with the other members of the team. Their obligation is to negotiate the best deals possible through the booking agent and help implement the vision of the artist. (Läntinen 2022.)

Social Media is the most important platform for marketing because the artist can directly be in contact with their fans and reach them more efficiently than with any other platform. This is why a social media producer is convenient, especially when the artist does not have time to create the content themselves. (Lyytinen 2022.)

5.8.3 Live Production Team

The live production team includes a tour manager, a live producer, a sound engineer, a monitoring engineer, a light engineer, a technician, a booking agent, a merchandiser, and a social media producer. To advertise the upcoming shows or a tour the artist uses their social media, a media house, or a smaller PR company. (Lyytinen 2022.)

A tour manager is in contact with the promoters of the venues, plans the tour schedule, and takes care that the technical riders and the backstage riders are implemented at the venues in the way the deal says. If the tour manager has a good connection to logistics, they book the tour bus or other vehicles for the tour. Otherwise, the live producer or the manager takes care of it. (Lyytinen 2022.)

A live producer's responsibility is to organize the pre-production and the live production of the shows. This person does the live backtracks in advance and is in contact with the light engineer, the front-of-house sound engineer, and other technicians who are booked for the show. It is their responsibility as a team to make the technical production happen as planned. The live producer is the one to make sure the artist's visual and technical wishes for the live shows are put into effect. (Lyytinen 2022.)

A booking agent books the shows and negotiates the deals with the customers. They must get approval from the artist or the artist's manager before closing the deals. The shows must be booked the way the routing from venue to venue is financially viable. The deals must be in a written format, as a contract, and in a digital format. If there is not a written contract but only a verbal contract, it does not apply as an official contract when a conflict appears between the customer and the artist (apeopleschoice.com).

A merchandiser sells the official merchandise products of the artist at the venue. They build up the shop at the venue and do the inventory of the products. An efficient merchandiser has the ability to be well organized, count fast, and sell a lot of the Artist's products. The creative side of their work is when they do

customer service and aim to make the shop appear original and professional. (Indeed.com.)

The Social Media producer is the one making the content for the artist's social media channels. It is common for them to be the ones taking the photos and videos of the artist while they are on the road, at live events, and on other occasions. They edit the material and make the posts for the artist. There are social media producers who concentrate on a certain field in social media and not doing everything regarding the Artist's social media. Some artists want to write their own posts with their "voice" and deliver the material to the Social Media producer. (Sani 2022.)

5.9. Challenges

The biggest challenge for an artist is to find loyal and trustworthy people around the artist. It is important to recognize the people who want to further the artist's career and the people who are there only to use the artist for their own advantage. When the artist becomes successful, they get surrounded by people who give advice on what to do in their careers and help them get successful in their careers. The downside of getting success is when the artist gets surrounded by people who try to take advantage of them. To avoid getting used, the artist should carefully select the people who get to be in the close circle. Learning how to recognize trustworthy people comes from having different experiences of human relations. (Lyytinen 2022.)

The artist gets offers that at first hand sound intriguing, but depending on who is making the offer, the offers do not necessarily take towards the artist's goals. One must carefully consider the offer and read the contract thoroughly before signing anything. There are lawyers who have expertise in the music and entertainment business, who help to understand the legal text used in contracts. If the artist is a member of Finland's *Muusikkojen Liitto*, they get legal help for free. (Lyytinen 2022.)

5.10. Expert Advice

To make wise decisions on an artist's career it is essential to have the offered deals in writing, read the deals carefully, and have trustworthy guidance. There are cases where the artist has signed a deal that is not profitable for the artist, and they are bound by the contract to work for the record label for years and then they are forgotten, and they cannot do anything about it. To avoid this, one must read the contract draft carefully and use professional help to fully understand the presented terms of the contract. This applies also to the deals that are negotiated between the agencies and customers. The artist must see the contracts made between the agency and the customer. This way the artist is always aware of what the financial deals are and what other aspects the agency offers to the customer representing the artist. (Sani 2022.)

The connections and relations built through years of attending multiple events and collaborations are important to maintain. They create the foundation of the continuance of one's career. Whether the connection is a musician, a producer, a promoter, or a person from a record label from the early days of the artist's career, they are as important. When there comes a day for a need of a trustworthy collaborator all the connections are essential for the future of the artist. (Sani 2022.)

Today, solo artists keep in contact with their fans more efficiently and they use social media to promote their music and themselves. Every artist has their own style to express themselves through social media and it has become an important part of their promotional work. (Leppäluoto 2022.) The artist makes posts on different platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, TikTok, and Twitter, in the way they find the most comfortable for themselves. They follow trends on what kind of posts are most followed and take advice from their social media producers. Some artists are not on social media posting themselves, but they have a social media producer who takes care of it. (Sani 2022.)

Promotion is everything when releasing music and this is why the artist must make various appearances on radio, TV shows, advertisements, and public events. The best way to promote their music is to tour a lot and have the songs on the radio and all possible streaming services. (Sani 2022.)

6 A SOLO ARTIST'S HEALTHCARE

Health is the perfect physical, mental, and social state of a person! (Saari 2015, 70.)

The combination of body and mind is the instrument of a solo artist, which one uses to implement their art. Taking intense care of one's health is the most important job for an artist. In order to preserve the ability to practice their profession, do their art, and live a balanced, happy life for as long as possible, one must be fully dedicated to taking care of themselves. The body and mind working equally together for the artist's benefit are the tools to succeed. All solo artists have their own personal methods, medical science, alternative science, and mentors they have found to help take care of their health. There are professional doctors specified in the music industry, who can help an artist with their health issues. Most of the health issues are possible to prevent by healthy life habits, reducing stress, and getting enough rest. To prevent health problems and achieve the best possible performance in an artist's life and career, functional medicine could be the answer. (Saari 2015, 71.)

One of the most acknowledged doctors specializing in functional medicine, Aki Hintsa (Saari 2015), has developed a method to prevent health issues, improve performance, and achieve the goals of athletes and normal persons' lives and careers. The method is still used amongst F1 athletes and Olympic athletes around the World. The method is called *CORE*, and its basic thought is to live a life with its full potential by finding one's physical, mental, and social balance together. To achieve this, they must not intentionally try to separate their personal and professional lives. In this case, it means the artist lives the life of a solo artist all the time, not part-time. This means the artist's daily routines; health plans and social life are constructed to achieve balance in one's life. The immediate effect on the artist's professional life is to be seen as a positive impact. (Saari 2015, 73.)

If there are problems in the artist's personal or professional lives, they have a direct negative impact on each other. These two lives live and react symbiotically, and this is why they must be considered as one. No matter what kind of life or profession one is presenting, this is always the case and should be considered. There are three main questions to be asked and answered to make the best individual healthcare plan for the artist. The questions of who you are, what you want, and do you control your own life are essential to answer. When the core reasons are taken care of, the artist can live a full life and give the best performance in their actions going towards their career goals. The same method should be used amongst all artists. (Saari 2015, 85-98.)

6.1. Physical Health

A balanced physical health helps the artist to achieve their goals, avoid health problems, and have a long-lasting career and life. The artists should consider themselves athletes because of the similarity of the two being as goal-oriented professions. Both professions include certain routines, exercises, rest, traveling, diet, and a goal to achieve with all the hard work. To know what to improve or change in the daily routines, the artist should first figure out what is the goal they want to achieve, and what it requires physically and mentally. They must ask themselves who they are to understand the level of understanding their own identity and what are their values and important things to them. (Web.uniarts.fi.)

6.2. Vocal Health

The ability of a human voice to work physically in a healthy way is a sum of various factors in the body. It is a combination of the hydration level, stress level, energy level, tension in the muscles, nutrition, and the overall health of the body. The vocal cords are one part of the that needs careful attention. Different artists have their own methods that they have noticed working for themselves. (Nidcd.nih.gov.)

Methods for taking care of a singing voice: Using water steam to hydrate vocal cords, daily rehearsing at different levels to maintain the stamina in the voice, being quiet to support mucosal cell regeneration, internal hydration to support the elasticity of mucous membrane and the body's metabolism. Having a healthy, custom-made nutrition plan that supports the artist's daily routines. Physical exercise and enough rest support gaining strong stamina of the body and mind. Daily meditation for ten minutes helps reduce stress, keep the voice in shape, and support overall mental and physical health. (Nidcd.nih.gov.)

6.3. Mental Health

A balanced mental health is the most important tool for an artist. To be able to perform their best, the artist needs to have a healthy balance in their psyche and a strong ability to concentrate certain feelings into a certain song. In a studio during a recording session, one must have the right mood and mental state to give their best performance on the track at that moment. All artists have their own methods and rites before, during, and after the sessions. To achieve the mental balance the artist must take care of their physical health at the same time. It goes both ways. To avoid depression, light sports such as walking, or some other form of athletics help to reduce serotonin hormone in the brain and make the sense of a good feeling mentally and physically. (Web.uniarts.fi.)

7 CONCLUSION

In this study, the goal was to find an answer to how to build a solo career in the music industry. The study researched the reasons and consequences of certain individuals becoming solo artists, what were their ways of pursuing it, and how they remained in the music business while gaining success. The results of this study were implemented through qualitative expert interviews, which indicated the common key factors and patterns between the artists' life events and ways to implement their professions. Articles and literature regarding the music industry, music business, and professional sports were used to gain information and confirmation for the research on how to build a solo career in the music industry.

The result of the research implies that an individual starts orientating to become a solo artist from their early childhood. Most of the interviewees' parents were musicians or they had encouraged the interviewees in other ways toward music. The artists were surrounded by instruments at home, they were able to rehearse at their friends', or they had other hobbies in music. They had siblings and friends who had a common interest in music, and they could rehearse together and share experiences. All the expert interviewees had had encouraging environments and positive childhood experiences with music.

Becoming a solo artist is not a matter of fortunate life events, but it is a result of constant work by rehearsing, creating contacts, developing skills, and educating themselves in the music business. Developing one's career forward a solo artist must have a healthy self-criticism and the ability to observe themselves from the perspective of the audience and still follow their own vision. The artist must make sacrifices on a personal and professional level in their lives, and it involves changes in human relations and in life habits. The struggle to balance between the private and professional lives appears for example as alcoholism or in other symptoms. Sometimes the artist can make a change into better life habits and succeed to continue their career.

The artist builds up their career through adamant and long-winded work while creating their music and art. The key factors to gain success in the music industry are a continuum of work, knowledge of the music business, and good social skills.

The maintenance of one's career is a result of wise decisions, unyielding continuous work, and an efficient team behind them. A solo artist does not need a manager when they have the ability to manage themselves. Instead, they must have an efficient team taking care of the production in the studio, the release of the album, and the live production. To avoid making unprofitable choices and decisions, the artist must be perceptive about whom they trust and keep the trustworthy relations close.

The music business is a highly competitive industry with talented artists who strive to stand out and solo artists are just one sector of artists. To stand out and remain relevant in the music industry the artists must keep on making music and promoting their art by touring and being active on social media. They must constantly update their image, and make appearances in all sorts of media, especially social media. It has become the most important tool for artists to promote themselves.

To remain functional, the artist must take care of themselves thoroughly. This means they must consider their body and mind as their instrument and follow a healthy lifestyle. An artist must constantly balance between their personal life and professional life. Finnish doctor, Aki Hintsa, developed a method called *Core*, originally to help professional athletes. The ideology of the method is living a fully balanced life defined by the individual's life, serving the needs of the private and professional aspects of their lives as one totality, creating balance. In this study, the method is suggested for being used with artists, because the nature of their lives is as demanding, and goal-oriented as professional athletes'.

There are various types of solo artists - some have a history in a band, some are active band members while building a solo career, and some have been solo artists to begin with. Nevertheless, they all are driven by the same ambition, passion, and love for music. They have a vision they express through their art, on their own terms. They all have a calling to the profession, and an urge to express their feelings through their art and perform it to the audience. They have voices drawing wide audiences listening to what the artists have to say. Solo artists have the power as idols and entrepreneurs to change attitudes, trends, and principles of society – they could even change the world.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Interview with Tommi Läntinen

Interviewer: Noora Louhimo

Date: 22nd of March 2022

LOUHIMO: When and how did your story start as an artist?

LÄNTINEN: If we go to the beginning, I started by playing the trumpet for 6 years. In the last year of playing the trumpet, I started another path in the Army Orchestra. But also, there were rehearsals at my friend's house basement. There we could play different instruments like guitars and such. My friend's father had a band, and they did not use their instruments during the week so we could use them. Then we started writing and playing our own music right away. I do not know about the quality of the music, but we were ready to go for it. Our influences were bands like Bad Company, Tendency, and Eagles. That is how it all started.

LOUHIMO: What age were you at when you began to play the trumpet?

LÄNTINEN: I started to play the trumpet in the 3rd grade, I was about 9 years old. When I was about 15- or 16-years old Rock and Roll music got the hold on me.

LOUHIMO: Was it your own choice to play trumpet?

LÄNTINEN: Yes, it was. I got interested, because there was a teacher, Yrjö Ros-tomo, at my school in Turku, who introduced the instrument to me. I had always been intrigued by music and I learned to play the trumpet quite well. I still can read the notes, slowly but surely. Lately, when there has been a project that I needed to sing some harmonies to, I could do it.

LOUHIMO: How did your childhood affect the beginning of your career?

LÄNTINEN: We were quite many in the family because we were 6 siblings at best. 2 big sisters, but later there were only 4 of us. So, there was a lot going on because of that. My father was very talented music-wise and a member of a choir.

He loved to sing and played some piano as well. At my friend's house, I could play music with my friends as much as I wanted. We could listen to rock music and play as loud as we wanted. We could hang out there as much as we liked. My friend's parents could bear us playing every evening for hours, and it was amazing how big of a gift it was for me to be able to hang out there. Because, at home, there was so much going on, and it was not possible to have that kind of peace. My sisters were born every two years, and I am the oldest of them. I always want to remember to thank my friend for that chance to hang out at his parent's basement, it was very important. It helped a lot to get fully into music.

LOUHIMO: Tell me more about the times in the Army Orchestra - was your first band born then?

LÄNTINEN: No, the first band was not born yet back then but something was "cooking" with the drummer of the orchestra. I played something with him for a while. The drummer played in some dance orchestra, so he was like a semi-professional. But it never went forward with him.

The first band was born with my friends. I met my friend Tomi back in the day at some football yard, when he moved nearby where I used to live. That is how the first band started. We were at a delicate age like 13 and 14 years old when we met, and music came into our lives. All the records around the world came very late in Finland, but Tomi got a very good weekly allowance because he got money from his grandmother as well, so he bought a lot of records to listen to. I usually never had money to buy records except a bit later in life.

We started the band with the excitement of music, and I was the most excited. Thinking about the bands and solo career. As a comparison, thinking about sifting sand - some people stay, and some are left behind. It is all related to the unbelievable passion and desire to make music. It all began from there. In the first years, there was a situation where someone sang a song in a terrible way and then I had to say, "Could I please sing this song, why, because I would sing it better".

LOUHIMO: Was that the way singing became your instrument?

LÄNTINEN: Well, I used to sing since I was a kid. When I was in the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd grade at school, I was playing the role of Josef in the Christmas play singing “Enkelitaivaan”. I have always been singing since I was a kid, and I used to sing at some family events. Singing has always been part of my life. I had a songbook, and it was turned upside down, but I had opened it on the right page, singing some kid's songs or so. I had a desire to perform. But still, like in every one of us maybe, there still lives a little shy boy in me. Still want to perform and win the fear and enjoy it. It is hard to explain, but you know what I mean, what happens inside the person when things start to roll and the whole body and mind are in it. It is hard to explain to a person who does not have the experience. In a weird way since I was a kid, I have had a feeling as if I had a certain task in life. But I still do not know if I have one. When you get feedback like “Thank you for singing that song”, “The song touched me” and things like that it is the best feeling.

LOUHIMO: How was the process of starting in a band? How was *Boycott* born?

LÄNTINEN: I had already recorded 4 to 5 albums before *Boycott*. I did two albums with *Fabriks* and in the 1980's I did gigs with them quite a lot. Then one day I said to my friend *Hombre* that I had a feeling it was not going to work with *Fabriks* anymore. Then he told me how I was at my best writing and performing songs and suggested we could put up a real rock band with a horn section. He knew some musicians that if they would come along, we would have such a great band.

I had been doing the groundwork for that kind of music, and I felt I was ready. I had found my own sound and thing how to perform and make music. The English language was dear to me and still is, and I performed the best with that language. There it all began. Like many things, there started a “spark” from what *Hombre* had said to me. My dear friend who has already passed away, said to me: “Do not forget that you do well what you do.”

LOUHIMO: Can you tell me more about the process you have been through getting involved in bands?

LÄNTINEN: I have always been the one who has been the band leader. Even though I am a solo artist, and sometimes a successful one, in the end, it is always a collaboration with a band. It is not possible for anyone to join the band, there must be a certain kind of musicians and good people. If the chemistry is not there, it will never be. There it all begins.

The talent of playing one's instrument is the first priority, that is the basic thing that should be good enough, and then comes the person. The will to be involved with the people in the group, individually and all together.

LOUHIMO: What do you think are the differences between a solo career and as a member of a band?

LÄNTINEN: Not so many differences, except the final word, and the veto vote belongs to me because the band is under my name. If there is anything that must be talked through, it is my duty to start the conversation. Everyone in the band understands it is my band and my vision that we are implementing. We play my songs on live shows.

I am a "band guy", and always have been. When I was participating in the TV show called *Suomilove*, the best thing was to meet my colleagues there. In the end, we get to see each other very rarely. Everyone is so busy being on the road, and of course, there are a lot of summer festivals and so on. But the thing is that I get to be with my band, and it is so great to see everyone play their instrument with such great talent. When I get on stage, I am very active in moving and talking all the time. I do not know where it comes from but, somewhere from the back of my mind, somewhere deep inside, somewhere primitive.

I am the one making all the deals, the band is about my solo career, and I have a good record company behind me. When things happen, they happen to me. In a democratic band, equality is more equal, and the decisions are done together. I prefer a gentle monarch rather than an unfunctional democracy.

LOUHIMO: Have you ever been in bands with nonfunctional democracy?

LÄNTINEN: Yes, I have. The classic is that, when everything is great, everyone is on board. But when times get hard, as a band leader, I am very alone. It does not change – I have to be the one to do the “dirty work”. There have been moments when I have had to say to someone “We have been thinking that you are not the right person to be in this”. For example, we had to change our bassist in Boycott, it was my duty to be the one to fire the guy. I took him aside in the backstage and told him the news. The guy said he appreciated me for telling the news straight to his face. In the end, if I had not acted like that, eventually I would have been “slapped on my own fingers”, so to say.

LOUHIMO: What big decisions have you had to make that have affected your professional or private relationships?

LÄNTINEN: One big thing from the past years has been that I have been sober for 10 years now, and it has had a huge positive impact on my life. It has affected a lot in my life.

The huge love to make and perform music is quite a lonely place, and not everyone has it. Some people want to have it as a hobby, and it is alright. The guitarist of *POLICE*, Andy Summers once said in the prologue of his book: “Stay amateur, stay free”. To accept that one cannot take just a little bit of something when talking about the music business, one has to go all the way. I have had such a long career, and times have been very hard sometimes. Like ten years ago I had very hard times, and that affected my relationships. But I still have the desire, passion, and will to go forward and make music. “Via Dolorosa” was born out of a young man’s pain when nothing was going forward. I actually have great lyrics in English to the song, but they were never released.

LOUHIMO: What problems you have had in your career, and how have you solved them? (*Music business*)

LÄNTINEN: Thinking about my career and problems in the music business, there have been moments when I have realized I used to work with the wrong people or someone else working with me, has not been the right person to work with me. That the chemistry was not working between us. I was working on big a label,

making a gold and platinum album in Finland in the 1990s. I was an international artist. In Finland back in that time selling 50 000 albums was the limit for a gold album. I felt it was very hard to be working on the label. People were changing all the time.

In big business, there is always “a keyman”, a person who is the producer, trustee, and guy from the label, who has seen and heard the artist, and then signed them. When that person is changed into someone unprofessional, then everything goes down. If the new person does not appreciate what the artist is and is doing, saying:” Why are you doing this shit”, the trust is gone. Then all I can think about is “Wait a minute, this shit has made a lot of money to your label”. I left the label because of that. I was in a good spot, I thought I could have more freedom to do what I wanted, but it did not go like that.

LOUHIMO: How did you build up your career for the last 40 years?

LÄNTINEN: Some things can be built up and sometimes things just happen, taking chances that are offered. Knowing in the gut what offers should go for, like saying to yourself “Yes, now is the time to take this chance”, those kinds of moments happen surprisingly often. Sometimes I have not taken some offers, and I regret it afterward. Not too seriously, but anyways.

And then about my friend Hombre - sometimes there are people who can see things from another angle. One has to recognize the moment of excitement like knowing that it makes sense, because it is such a crazy idea so it should be checked out and give in to the situation.

At the end of Boycott times, the label SONY started to allure me to go for a solo career. I did work for another year in the band because we had to pay the loan Boycott had as a company. Then I started a band with Hombre and another friend named Tommi. But I could not start a new project right away, because I have never been a person who just leaves a band or does something bad to anyone by purpose.

I have created my career by doing things all the time. I am a child of a generation writing music and making albums. When Fabriks came into my life in 1979, our first album came out in 1980, and a radio station called Rock Radio came up in 1982. At that time, they had a music show lasting for 1,5 hours on Mondays and Wednesdays, and later the show was also on Fridays. If my music got played in it on two days out of three, it was a hit song. And if Yleisradio played my song as well on their list, then the song was a success. It was a different world back then. Like, once we were on our way to play a show, when I got a call from the label saying that we had sold 6000 records, and now the album or the song was a hit. The critical point had been achieved.

It is a good question about how I would have created my career systematically. I have always gone with my gut feeling. I have always loved music so much and creating it. I admit, I have been a bit blue-eyed as well back then, and just concentrated on writing my music.

LOUHIMO: What kind of team do you have?

LÄNTINEN: I have quite a good team now. A good label behind me, Vallila Music House. Gabi Hakanen is the leader of the label, and he is a music guy and a great guy as a personality. He has got a good business mind, and he is well-connected. He is a good guy in the business. Then I got a good producer, Aki Sihvonen. Then partially involved there is Mr. Laitinen, who has a company called Inquisition, and this is a studio collaboration. Good agent at Warner Music Live, her name is Niina Jalonen. I have a good band coming up for the next shows, and we start rehearsing together in a week. Then there are good old acquaintances, the technicians for live production. I have a lot of people around me who have been involved in my career for a long time and are happy about my success and about the last 9.5 years of being sober. Because they have seen it all before that time as well. I prefer to succeed with them. like we get to play at some festivals and so on. Next summer we will be doing some and then some concerts. I want to do it with the people who have walked beside me for all these years.

LOUHIMO: Have you had the same band for a long time as well?

LÄNTINEN: Not really, the variety is wide. Last summer I had some of the guys from Reckless Love, Hessu and Jallu, who played the festival shows. Next summer we have the same lineup up except there will be Mr. Jussi Koskinen playing the bass. He did play the bass in my album as well. Then there will be Ana from Shiraz Lane playing the drums. It is going to be so great. I love to have my music played in a hard rock music style. Next fall will be the same lineup. It also depends on who can and want to commit to the band. Usually, the band members I hire are busy with other bands.

LOUHIMO: Have you ever had a certain lineup as a band?

LÄNTINEN: There has always been a certain lineup for a certain period of time in the band. I have never liked stand-ins, that the lineup would be changing all the time. The longest period of time has been a few years with the same lineup, like 2 to 4 years. The thing is I like it so much when the band has a “good swing” going on and I have had such great musicians in my band. There are super talented Finnish musicians, from the young to the elder generations. And I have started to enjoy the fact that there comes a new person in the lineup bringing new energy. The quality does not suffer, but instead, it gives the vibe that the person is great and puts out new ideas.

LOUHIMO: What have you learned during your career? What has been the most valuable lesson?

LÄNTINEN: That is a really good question. My biggest fear has always been that I am left alone. But still, I have always walked alone. I noticed I am not alone. I have got my team, and the music is in the center, not my ego. I have learned that it is not about the ego, but instead, it is about the practicalities, and it is a good thing. Now, I enjoy more than ever when someone else has a better idea, and I can take a step back in that moment and say “Yes! That's a great idea! ”, and then the ideas start rolling with everyone in the band and we share ideas together. So, I am not alone. Even though I am the face, and it is my vision and my voice, everyone in the band realizes that this is a good thing for all of us. Let us enjoy together and not play games against each other.

LOUHIMO: Have you had something big happen in your career or have you had to make a big decision that has affected your art or career?

LÄNTINEN: Getting sober has affected me the most. And realizing that if I want to write something it does not have to be anything mystic or cryptic. Accepting myself, and the fact that all I can do is my best, as long as it carries. If I have to think about something big that has happened, that is it. I have had gold and platinum albums, a long career, and great moments of success, but there has always been “a shadow” behind that. I have realized that all of it is just a loaned thing going on.

LOUHIMO: How has your career affected your identity? (Artist Identity)

LÄNTINEN: The thing about who am I when I’m on stage, the performing artist and not my private self. The thing when there were great successful years and the parties just kept on going. I have realized something through the story of *Alice Cooper*, because of having a similar kind of story as he has. At some point in life, Alice was in very deep waters because of his alcohol and drug abuse. He thought in his mind that his private self, Vincent Furnier, was acting as Alice Cooper. He personally is not Alice; he would be Alice only on stage. In his private life, he is a successful businessman, a husband, a grandfather, and a man playing golf as a hobby. A person who actively participates in the life of the society.

So, in my perspective, I think that Tommi Läntinen, even if it is my own name, is the stage personality and the entertainer. Tommi is private. It helps me to think that Tommi Läntinen as a character goes on stage to put on the show.

LOUHIMO: Does Tommi differ a lot from Tommi läntinen?

LÄNTINEN: I am quite private person. For example, meeting colleagues and everyone at the studio of the TV show *Suomilove* was a lot of fun. The happiness about meeting everyone was there, and the good feeling from others was affecting me as well. But I am a very private person. It is almost a year since I started

a new relationship and it was published. Afterward, I got a bit regretful that we told it in public because in some way I felt like losing privacy. I feel irritated when the media ask about my private life. I am not there to talk about my private life. For example, there was one premiere where I was very uncomfortable when there were reporters taking photos, forcing me and my partner in the same photo to get a story. One should always think about what you give to the media. Even though I am an old dog in the industry, I gave in a bit. The more one gets to keep the private life intact the better. One has to remember oneself and the fact that one has a right to live life and love like anyone else. And that is the right to my private self.

LOUHIMO: How has your career choice affected your family and other relationships?

LÄNTINEN: Well, first of all, when others have had vacations, I have always been at work. When others spend their weekends free, I have always been at work. Even at the time, when I was still drinking, I always enjoyed the normal rhythm of everyday life started on Mondays and I did not have the rockstar lifestyle until Wednesday. Of course, it affects me, what else can I do? Like I said before, I cannot take just one little part of it. Maybe in the end it is like, I don't know, the most important is to maintain your own sense and identity. No matter how successful you are. Because when things are bad, it is bad. But when you are lifted somewhere super high, I have always thought that it is not reality. But still, I have also slipped into that. When my solo career started in the 1990s I was the golden boy, and I almost felt as smart as I should check my lottery numbers.

LOUHIMO: Did you tour around the world with Boycott?

LÄNTINEN: We did go to the United States to record an album and did a five-week tour. Then, of course, we went to Sweden and to the United Soviet (Russia) where we were getting big. We were placed in the ranking on the local radio as the 7th most popular band. The label *MELODY* published our first "dollar-paying" license of our album, and that was before the time *Bon Jovi* had released their *New Jersey* album.

LOUHIMO: What do you want to warn about in the music business?

LÄNTINEN: What comes to mind if I would say this to someone: "Do not believe everything they tell you or say about you. Whatever your opinion is about yourself or your self-image, hold on to it even a little bit. Because that might be the right reflection of yourself. All that you believe lifting you up, the same reasons can put you down." I do not recommend giving all of yourself, except on stage and at the studio recording by the microphone.

LOUHIMO: What is the most important thing about building a solo career and why?

LÄNTINEN: One should always ask themselves what the motives are and do it with honesty. Like, why am I doing this?

LOUHIMO: What is your motive?

LÄNTINEN: The passion, the love, and the calling to this profession. And it is quite a thin motive because it is so fragile. Luckily, I have two of them, who takes care of it all – the other one is Tommi Läntinen and the other is Tommi, and they can discuss.

LOUHIMO: Thank you so much for this interview and for letting me into your world even a little bit. I heard you had your book released in 2019. Is it as an audiobook as well?

LÄNTINEN: Yes, it is also as an audiobook somewhere.

LOUHIMO: Is it worth reading in your opinion?

LÄNTINEN: Yes, it is. My only motive for the book was to be honest.

Appendix 2. Interview with JP Leppäluoto

Interviewer: Noora Louhimo

Date: 05.04.2022

LOUHIMO: Tell me about how your story started as an artist. (artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: My story as an artist started around my twenties. At first, there were some cover bands and different “rehearsing” bands. In 1994 I joined a metal band called *Charon* and we started seriously making promotional records, got a record deal, and started making albums. That was maybe when my “artist self” started to rise for the first time. I was the one in the band who did a lot of promotional work for the band. I did interviews and my face was everywhere and that is how my name became familiar to the public - comparing for example a band musician who did not do interviews.

When *Charon* quit in 2011, I was already in a band called *Harmaja* and we continued to be active and did three albums. And again, I was the one making the promotional representation. After that, I moved to Tampere, joined *Musiikkiteatteri*, and bit by bit I started to make some troubadour and duet gigs. I worked very hard – every weekend I did as many gigs as possible around Finland, making my living, not thinking about anything else. Then I started to miss making original music and gathered the courage to start my solo career. Before, I was too afraid to go only with my own name and make my own music. Because when you go down that way, there is no return. That is how it started to build up, it was kind of a half accident.

LOUHIMO: Can you tell approximately how long it took you to get to the point of starting your own solo career? If you start from your first band. (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I was part of different bands for about fifteen years. *Charon* lasted about sixteen years, and *Harmaja* was active for about five years. It was not like in 1994 I had decided I will go towards a solo career; it was mostly a consequence of everything.

LOUHIMO: Let us go back in time to your childhood. How did it affect you becoming an artist? (influences)

LEPPÄLUOTO: It affected me a lot actually – When I was a kid, my father was a troubadour, and he toured around Finland. He loved to sing and play guitar and he was the one to take me to his rehearsing room for the first time. I remember the moment my first spark for music was lit when I heard someone play their drumkit in the rehearsal room. The way that I felt the beat and the pressure coming from the drums was so powerful. And when I heard the electric guitar it made a huge impact on me, not that I decided right then and there it is what I want to play as my instrument, but I was super intrigued.

I was around ten or eleven years old when I got into *KISS* and things outside of music. I was about in fifth grade when I started to try out with different bands. We were playing in the basement and made drums out of big cans. We arranged our first gig in the basement, and we handmade tickets for that event. Then we gave those tickets to our friends and told them to show the tickets when they came to our show. A small dream began to smolder in there. Well, not so small of a dream, when I realized this was something I wanted to do in the future. But of course, back then I could not even dare to dream that I would be able to do this as my job. It felt too utopian.

LOUHIMO: When did you have the moment of realizing this is what you want to do?

LEPPÄLUOTO: It was that show in the basement when I got to perform with my friends and to my friends. It was so exciting, and I thought “I’m good at this”.

LOUHIMO: Have you always wanted to sing, or have you played some other instruments? (Influences)

LEPPÄLUOTO: When we had that first show in the basement, I was the singer. When that show was just about to happen, I got cold feet when I saw so many friends coming to the show, so I asked our drummer to switch places with me.

Singing came along a lot later (my puberty came very late), I was about sixteen years old. A friend of mine Teemu, at high school, was already a very good pianist, and many times I went to his place, and he played piano while I sang. I did not think of myself as a singer, and I was quite sensitive about it. I remember one time I was driving in my car somewhere with Teemu and we heard *Eppu Normaali* on the radio and I sang along. Then Teemu said I sang better than the original and that was somehow a very exciting moment. Because then I thought, maybe I could try singing more. Then we started to gather different instruments at Teemu's home and established our first band and I was the singer.

LOUHIMO: Was the band *Charon*?

LEPPÄLUOTO: No, it was not - this was one of the first tryouts. We played some Peer Günth and all sorts of music. There were a lot of local musicians that we tried to play with, and from 1990-1994 I did practice becoming a serious musician. I joined the metal band *Charon* in 1994 and we started doing some gigs.

LOUHIMO: Why did you want to start a solo career after all those bands? (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: After *Charon*, many people said to me I should start doing my own stuff with my own name. But then I was too afraid to start doing music with only my name. I had always been a band person and I loved sharing everything with the other members.

I was afraid of the thought of playing my music alone out there until it really happened. I am not sure why I was so afraid of starting a solo career, I guess the reason is that when you are so naked there and put it all in. Growing older gave me the courage to do it.

LOUHIMO: At what age did you start your solo career? (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I guess I was about forty years old; I have done everything quite late. I am happy that everything has not happened to me when I was in my twenties. To me, my career and my music are a lifelong journey, hopefully.

LOUHIMO: How did you build up your solo career? Where did it start? (Artist/Identity)

LEPPÄLUOTO: It started with the troubadour gigs I did. My name was on the doors of different bars and restaurants advertising my gigs. Of course, the base came from the promotional work I had done while being in the bands. When I decided to make my first original single, my solo career officially started. I did not think of it like, here I come solo career, but then I noticed how the media and others talked about it.

When I released my first single "Purppuraa", it was not the style I wanted eventually but I wanted to start with something. I had a big producer and a big label Universal Music behind me and I felt we were seriously building my solo career, the artist JP Leppäluoto. I was still a bit lost with the style but I just wanted to release new music and not make a fuzz about it.

The media started to talk about me building up my solo career, and that was when I realized I was a solo artist. It was exciting and scary but on the other hand, it was wonderfully liberating. I could make all the decisions about who I am, and what kind of music I make, and I was responsible for everything about my career. When I was in the band, I did not want to make all the decisions. I liked the idea of making collective decisions within the band and I was one part of the machine.

But when my solo career started the feeling of freedom was so great. I could decide about the cover art, I could choose a producer and do whatever I wanted. I could choose the musicians and I could start creating my thing. Bring out my vision.

LOUHIMO: How was the collaboration with the record label Universal Music? How did you get the deal in the first place? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Back in the day *Charon* had a deal with the label Spinefarm, and eventually the label united with the label Universal Music. So, I already knew people from there and at that moment it was the only label I could ask if they would be interested in collaboration. But in the end, a big label like that was the

wrong place for me. That is why, my experience of it is quite “cold”. It was full business - The thing was that they decided about everything – take promo photos like this, we, pick this photo, and we decide how you look. Let’s take that producer, you sound like this. And I was like ok, I guess they know what they are doing, let’s make it mainstream first, and then let’s see what will happen. But it was a wrong way for me. On a big label like Universal, they released one single and then wanted to watch what was going to happen. If nothing happened, they were ready to dump you.

LOUHIMO: So, did you have a deal like you could just leave then whenever you wanted? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Yes, it was just for one single, and then if I had wanted to continue there was an option to do so. But it did not feel quite right to continue there and felt I had my hands tied in everything. I realized, that for me the best way as a solo artist has been to contribute financially and be part of the songwriting team in the production and then I have a good team behind me – a good distributor, promoter, and an agent. I want to be the one making the decisions about my career.

LOUHIMO: What label are you in now? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Playground Music. They distribute and finance my albums. But like last time, the budget was half of what I needed, so I did finance the other half myself with my band. Playground Music feels the right label for me. They give me 100% liberty as an artist. I like the idea of having music as mainstream so that it will enable the continuance of the work. A different case would be singing only cover songs. Then I would not have to make any albums, but I would get paid. But when I want to my own music, every time I perform it, it is like a business card to a new customer. The solo career building up is seen immediately in the size of the shows, the audience, the quality of the shows, and the money we get from the shows.

LOUHIMO: let’s talk more about building a solo career. What kind of team do you need behind you? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I call these people “mirrors”. I have a great producer Samuli Erkilä, I think you know him too. I have talked with you about him as well, that he is like a great mirror. Like, I can’t get as productive at home as I can get with Samuli. I write full songs, but the final production happens with Samuli in the studio. And with that product, it is easy to go to labels. But I haven’t tied myself to any labels as much anymore. One album and one option, if it feels right. The most important thing is to have a good core team and at the moment that is me and Samuli. It does not require more – everything starts with good music.

LOUHIMO: How about the people outside the studio, who else do you need in your team? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Good distributor with good connections to media, for example, different radios and magazines. Usually, the promoter from the label get the interviews for me and try to get my songs to playlists and radio. A good agent is required as well.

LOUHIMO: Where and when do you think it is good to promote your own music? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: It depends on the music but also, I think the shows and festivals are the most important places for promoting your music. Festivals are very good because they promote themselves with a big money and if you get your band in there, your name will start to show up in the marketing of the festival and people start to notice you. - It can be the most important thing to some artists to have their music played on the radio, to get shows. For some reason, I have been able to do shows even without the radio playlisting. If some big radio would take my music to their playlist, my career would get to another level, I know that much.

Some artists have different ways to build up their careers - for example, being a guest star in some TV shows. But I’ve noticed that if one starts building up their career only through some reality show, then people profile you as a reality TV star, not a solo artist. Then their music is not so interesting, even if it would be good. Personally, I like going with the music first. There are a lot of places to get

heard, and to me, social media is very important. The group of my followers is very loyal, and it has become very important to me.

LOUHIMO: Please, tell me more about your social media behavior - how do you keep in contact with your fans? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I make posts whenever very casually. But when I do, it causes a lot of buzz and likes. I am not quite sure if I keep it very organized, but when I do post something, I want to make it very personal. So that my followers will know that it is me who writes and talks to them directly. Usually, my posts are only about my music. When I did Livestream shows during the pandemic, I promoted them only through social media and I noticed how loyal my followers were, so I could manage well the marketing only through my social media.

LOUHIMO: So, you do not need 1 million followers, but if you have 1000 loyal followers and fans, it can totally support your career and livelihood.

LEPPÄLUOTO: Yes, exactly. If they commit to supporting you and your releases, then yes.

LOUHIMO: Please, tell me – how do the roles differ from each other being a solo artist and a band member? (Identity)

LEPPÄLUOTO: In everything, there are good and bad sides. As a solo artist, I am responsible for everything, financially as well. It can be very stressful. The music that is so important to the solo artist, is not necessarily as important to the band. Even if one can get people to work for their solo career, still they are the only ones to love it with a full heart. Then to compare - in a band, every member is “putting their eggs into the same basket”. It is a brutal world.

LOUHIMO: Talk more about the emotional side of these roles – How has it felt to be a solo artist versus a band member? (Identity)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Well, it feels quite the same, whether being a solo artist or a band member. But as a solo artist, one is the leader of the work, wanted or not. And

the others are then working for the artist. It is just the way it is, even one can be a good guy or a gal. But in my band, there is Samuli for example, who is working for me, but this has not affected our relationship, for some planetary reasons. Being in a band the great thing is that everyone is working for the team. Of course, not everyone is a team player. I see myself as a team player and I like the idea that everyone in the band is working for the same cause, working equally, and getting paid equally. But building up a career demands certain kinds of sacrifices and then you must be alone as well.

LOUHIMO: Would you recommend being in a band before going on a solo career? (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Maybe yes. Being in a band teaches a certain kind of solidarity that is required as well as being a solo artist. The same rules still appeal to hired musicians. I would recommend the band experience before the solo career so that one would not get too selfish. In my opinion as a solo artist, I have to take even more under my consideration of others' feelings. I like to be nice and fair to people.

LOUHIMO: When you are nice to others, they are nice to you and are more willing to do a lot of things on your behalf.

LEPPÄLUOTO: Yes, and like, I have the songs that I love and want to perform and get to do that with the people who are behind me with full heart, so I do want to feed that flame for the common solidarity. So that everyone in my band would feel comfortable and they would like to perform with me.

LOUHIMO: What big decisions have you had to make in your career and how have they affected your relationships? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I am a person who does not want to say anything bad to anyone. I have noticed that this is a brutal business, and I must think of certain things that "This is business, I have to make this decision for my career". For example, for me, it was a terrible place when I had to let go of my previous agent. At first, when I did troubadour and duet gigs, my calendar was as full or empty as I wanted

because of my agent. If I noticed in a week that I did not have a gig, I was going to be broke, I called my agent and asked if I could get three gigs for next weekend, she could manage it easily.

Then when I started to go toward my solo career, I knew I needed bigger shows and connections, and I knew she did not have enough for that, so I had to let her go. So, when I had made the decision, I had to let her know, it was terrible. Even though it was just about business, it felt very hard. But it was a move I had to make for my career, and I must be able to make decisions like that. I befriend people very easily and commit to them. I am a friend of hers and now we are in a good place, but back then it made us a bit distant for a while. She did not take the news so well, of course. But these kinds of situations are inevitable and can happen with labels, agents, and other collaborators. In a solo career, I am alone with the decisions. Those decisions would have been much easier to make with a band. But I have grown from those experiences, and I like it. Now I can make decisions with more sense without losing myself along the way.

LOUHIMO: I guess you handled it very well anyway because you are still friends with her. How did you break the news to her? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I explained specifically how I think about my career, why I need bigger connections around me, and what are my goals. After moving to another agency, I kept connected with her. I wanted her to know I care about our relationship, even without the business side. Some people deal with stuff like this by just closing their phone or something, which is a terrible way to deal with things. I have had good feedback because of my straightforward attitude.

LOUHIMO: How did this decision affect your financial life? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: It affected my career by economic growth. If it had not happened, I would have gone back to her. Now I do less work but get more money. Bit by bit the show fees have gone up. With the first agent I did shows at first every week, then I noticed I could do more shows and then have a month off. Then I joined the musician's union and started taking time off with help from the union. That is how the songwriting started. Before, I did not have energy between the weekly

shows to any songwriting. I try to do so that I get the money I need and people around me get the money they need. I am not greedy in the matter of that.

LOUHIMO: What are your final goals? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I want to be a famous singer and a star. Not in the whole world, but in Finland. I want to be famous enough to support my living and do this for years.

LOUHIMO: Why did you choose the Finnish language in your singing, and not English as it was in Charon? (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I wanted to stay in Finland. I was asked to join some bands with international goals and tours around Europe and back then, I thought that I was also interested in that. Of course, because we did a tour around with Charon. But when I was asked to join the bands and I started to think about what I wanted, I noticed I could care less about an international career. I am not interested in touring around the world. And I fell in love with the Finnish language as well. I like to sing in English, which rings nicely as a singing language, compared to Finnish, but I like to make my career in Finland.

LOUHIMO: What does success mean to you? (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Success to me is to come by financially and so that people want to hear my music, the new music as well. I want to be able to tour with my music around Finland. I wanted away from the cover song path I was on, almost indefinitely. I have succeeded in that well except if we do not count *RASKASTA JOULUA* and *NORTHERN KINGS*.

LOUHIMO: How did you end up in projects *Raskasta Joulua* and *Northern Kings*? (Music Business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: back in 2005 the founder of *Raskasta Joulua* was trying to find a vocalist with a low register for the second *Raskaampaa Joulua* album and my agent (the first I had) recommended me. Quite quickly we started to work on

Northern Kings. In *Northern Kings*, we sing cover songs from different genres, but the arrangements are changed into the style of symphonic heavy metal.

LOUHIMO: Why do you do other stuff as well besides your solo career? (Identity)

LEPPÄLUOTO: In the times of *Charon* the first ten years I went with eyes wide shut and nothing else mattered in life or in music. Then I started to feel I wanted to test doing something else as well. First, I tried a bit with acoustic arrangements and went to some Christmas jams in my hometown and found it so exhilarating to sing for example *Billy Idol's "Rebel Yell"*. After that experience, I wanted to do things more various ways. When I joined *Raskasta Joulua* and *Northern Kings*, I was a bit worried if they would eat out from *Charon* but very fast, I noticed they all just fed each other in a good way. Not everyone likes to do things like that, but I do.

LOUHIMO: What kind of sacrifices have you made for your solo career? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I do not think I have had to make any big sacrifices for my solo career. The biggest hit for me was when we ended *Charon*. We realized that this was not going anywhere. There was left such an empty feeling after the band because there was more in the history than just the band. All my friends and things changed so radically - I had to gather myself quite a long time. It was not a sacrifice made for my solo career, but it led to it. Back then I would have not quit a band for a solo career.

I remember us touring in Russia and we got there quite successful for a while. Our label started saying things like the band should be more about me and not the band. I opposed right away saying there are five of us, not one. For me, friends were much more important back then than being a star.

LOUHIMO: Let us talk about your art – how have your decisions in life affected your art? (Identity)

LEPPÄLUOTO: It has been the other way around, I wonder. Music has always been everything to me. So, my surroundings have had to accept it, simple as that. Music and my art are so strong parts of my identity that if those were taken away from me, I feel like I would stop breathing. My music is me. If someone would come up to me and say, "You can't be like that, do like that", it would be the same as taking my head off. My surroundings have had to pay the price - I have built my career in a very selfish way knowing what I want, so to speak.

I have spoken with my children, and I started one conversation with my son by apologizing for being so much away. He said back to me "No, you have not been away." So, then I was like ok, maybe I have not been away then. He was proud of me for pursuing my dreams no matter what. If I talk about my past life, I did not get the support and understanding I needed for my career path, and that is why I pushed it forward even more. The people who did not understand it got out of my life.

LOUHIMO: That is very important to hear because many people if not everyone, struggle with different decisions like that.

LEPPÄLUOTO: First, you must make yourself happy, before you can make others happy.

LOUHIMO: What have you learned during your career? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I guess I have learned things mostly subconsciously. I have learned a lot about making decisions and facing difficult situations. It depends on the personality and how naturally it comes to one. Personally, those things have been very hard for me. I do not know how deep in my childhood we should go to understand why that is. But during my career, I have learned to go through the fire, not away from it.

I have learned how to think of myself as a product and not take everything so personally. I have to be able to talk about myself as "a package of barbecue sausage", that I sell. Sometimes there can be like a day or a month when I have "the

social media hangover” and feel anxious about it. Then I have to be able to watch myself from the outside and as the product.

LOUHIMO: How has your career affected your identity? (Identity)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I think, my career has created my identity. I have always been my music, my career. My identity has been molded by my career, pretty much since I was very young. When I was in sixth grade I started competitive dancing, and that is how I started performing. I have always been a performer. My career has affected my career for example in the way I dress - I feel I can dress how I like because I am an artist. I can say that my career is not in any way artificial, but it is me.

LOUHIMO: Have you ever done anything else as your job, than just music? (Influences)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Yes, I have always been working. I did have a “day job” until 2015. I started working already underage. I studied to become an HVAC professional and went to work at the local factory *Rauta-Ruukki*. Then I went off to the army as military police. After the army, I went working as a storage guy at the same company as my mother was working.

After sound design studies in Tornio City, I went to work at a printing house, where I worked for seven years. That was the longest working relationship at a day job for me. I have done sound design besides the job at the printing house. Fortunately, I was asked to work in Oulu at *Klaffituotanto* as a sound designer, mostly designing TV and documentary sound.

At first, I stepped in as a temp, but it changed when I was asked to work there more. I quit my job in the printing house and continued working as a sound designer for *Klaffituotanto* for about five years. Besides that, I started making radio adverts at home and I did that for a few years. After my work ended at *Klaffituotanto*, I continued making radio adverts for *SPS Discovery (Iskelmä Radio)* and soon got hired as the channel producer. That is how I ended up living in Tampere.

At the same time, I did work at a music theater. The job at the radio ended and so I started doing my own troubadour and duet gigs beside the theatre. I liked music theater a lot. I would have never thought I would put on a wig and sing *Popedia*, but that is what happened. It was a good school for me, and I did the music theatre for a few years. Then my troubadour and duet shows started to take a wing and I got paid well. I asked the director of the music theater if he would have been willing to pay more for the theatre gigs and he declined, so I left the theatre and continued doing my own gigs. It was totally worth it because I got paid much more for that than for the theatre. I realized I could get a much better salary through troubadour and duet gigs, than with other jobs.

LOUHIMO: What do you want to warn about in the music business? (Music Business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: I want to warn you about mediators. You should always watch out for your financial and legal rights. That you get what is yours and what is in the deal. Do not sell yourself at a too low price and do not let anyone fool you.

LOUHIMO: How have you financed your solo career? (Music business)

LEPPÄLUOTO: Pretty much the record labels have financed my albums but like for example last album was a bit pricier, so I put in my own money as well. I finance my career with the shows I do. The artist always pays.

LOUHIMO: What is the most important thing about building a solo career and why? (Artist)

LEPPÄLUOTO: There are lots of important things but there is one beyond others. Your solo career and being an artist won't be a success if you do not believe in yourself and love yourself a little bit. We must be a little self-loving in this industry and luckily it is acceptable for us.

Appendix 3. Interview with Erja Lyytinen

Interviewer: Noora Louhimo

Date: 25.05.2022

LOUHIMO: How did your childhood affect your choice of career? (influences)

LYYTINEN: My family and surroundings affected me a lot. My parents are musicians, and they had their own band since the 1960s. In the band, my mother played the bass, and my father played the guitar, and they sang together. My mother was the band leader and booked all the shows. At home, we had a very positive atmosphere towards music. I remember us having different instruments available at home, we listened to a lot of music, and especially rock music. My mother had always been a fan of heavy and rock music. There was no forcing into music or anything like that, but it was just very natural encouragement. There was never a pressure to like music or anything like that. Everything felt very natural and non-mandatory. I have two brothers and we always sang together, and we used to sing and perform at every family event with them and together as a family as well. A Natural environment for a young musician to grow up.

LOUHIMO: When and how did you get into playing guitar? (instrument)

LYYTINEN: I got intrigued by a guitar at the age of thirteen. I studied violin at the conservatory since I was seven years old. My parents decided to put me in the conservatory and at the beginning I resisted, but eventually, I liked playing the violin and continued playing it until I was a teenager. When I was thirteen, I was a bit interested in playing guitar, and I applied to have it as my side instrument in the conservatory.

Back then, there were not any electric guitar schools whatsoever. I was not approved and did not get the guitar as the side instrument, which was fortunate now that I think of it. Because, if I had got into that certain classical style, then maybe I would have not been so open to other styles after that. I was interested in rock music, and I stopped playing violin at the age of fourteen. It did not take for long for me to start playing guitar after that. It truly interested me, and it was so easy

at home just to grab one of my father's guitars and start playing. My father showed me some stuff to learn and said, "There you go!"

I learned to play the guitar independently, and a couple of my friends were interested in playing guitar as well, so we played together as well. Bit by bit, there started to be influences by listening to *Yngwie Malmsteen* and other solo artists. I felt immediately that this was my instrument.

LOUHIMO: How did Blues music as a genre get into your life? (artist identity)

LYYTINEN: I studied at a music college in Kuopio, and then later at the Kuopio Pop & Jazz Conservatory to become a musical director. No one at that school played blues back then, even it was part of the education. My other friends were more into playing more difficult and technical stuff, but I was very intrigued of the emotion in blues music. Hearing artists such as *Johnny "White" Winter*, *Koko Taylor* and *Ray Charles* for the first time, was mind-blowing moments. Those moments got me thinking that blues is the thing for me.

LOUHIMO: How did you become an artist? (Artist identity)

LYYTINEN: I was involved in several bands while studying in Kuopio. I had my own band, I was in a soul band as a backing vocalist, and whenever there was a need for a certain band and music, we put up a band for that. In the early 2000's I started to work on more of my solo material and I had a band, but it did not work out back then. People were too busy with other stuff they had. Then I met my ex-partner, and we started writing music and doing shows with his band. We did one album together me as a special guest of the band. In 2003 I started seriously pursuing my own solo career and did my debut solo album "*Wildflowers*".

LOUHIMO: Why did you want to become a solo artist? (Artist identity)

LYYTINEN: I had a strong vision of what kind of artist I wanted to become. I loved to write my own songs, sing them, and play the guitar at the same time. It was clear to me that I wanted to be a solo artist and have always had the ambition and passion for making my own music, which has brought me all the way to where

I am at right now in my career. Back in those times there was not so many female guitarists, and there was always someone pursuing please come to sing as a guest and not as a guitar player. So that was also what I wanted – to always keep the guitar with me.

LOUHIMO: How have you built up your solo career? (Music business)

LYYTINEN: In the beginning, there was no idea how to start, other than I realized, I needed people around who could help me. I needed a manager and an agent and also my ex-partner was very much involved in the production, and we had a common vision with him. It all started from having agents selling gigs here and there.

When I was signed at Finland's record label *Bluelight* I was still a rookie and trying to figure it all out, but I had learned some things from my parents, such as calculating the travel fees and day fees. I have always had it in my personality to manage myself among other things. Of course, during these past years, it has been very convenient for me in my situation. It is not for everyone to manage themselves. Some artists need a managing team around them to make things work.

My career had a bigger push when I got signed to a German record label Rush Records, where they even assumed I could manage my own production. This situation encouraged me to establish my own company, so I did. I had financed our travel costs from my own bank account before. Now that I had my own company, I had to get money from somewhere to build up the company and pay the costs through that. In the first years I had to borrow from my bank account or from my parents, so we could get on the road. It was pretty hard times in the beginning, to be honest. I had to keep many "strings" in my own hands and under control.

In the beginning, we booked some of our own gigs, calling and sending e-mails to clubs. Then we had to figure out how to do the production in practice when we got to the club. So, we had to manage a lot of things ourselves. It included dealing with accountable receipts, budget planning, schedule planning, and marketing came along a bit later. Nowadays it is so much easier to promote shows because of social media, which was not the case back in the day. Now everyone can

promote themselves easily, and take contact with the audience, fans, agents, and reporters through social media. Which is very good for this kind of business.

LOUHIMO: What kind of team do you have right now? (Music business)

LYYTINEN: I have three people in the office – a media assistant, a producer, and an administrator of my webstore. Then I collaborate with different freelance musicians, technicians, tour managers, merchandise sellers, and promoters. Then, of course, I have global collaborators like promoters and agents. I do not have an exclusive agent, we sell our own gigs in my company, we have private customers and companies, as well as booking agent companies, that we collaborate with on a yearly basis, and do tours with them. When certain connections are built, it is important to maintain them to continue, and sometimes changing the collaborator is not a good idea.

LOUHIMO: Do you have a manager? (Music Business)

LYYTINEN: I have never had a manager, other than myself. I have considered it sometimes, but I have never even tried to find one. I have always felt that there are so many things in my business to handle that I know better, and if there would come along a person to manage this, they should know very specifically the different departments of my business. But I have played with the thought lately that it could be my next step to have a manager. I have heard so many horror stories of managers who just talk but do not do anything. So, if I would hire a manager, that would be for some specific area of expertise, that I would think I need help for.

I have noticed that all individuals have their own unique paths. The ways of pursuing their goals to be successful are not the same for everyone. Like myself, I have my own way of operating my production, I am not in a big label or make mainstream music, I have paved my own way.

LOUHIMO: What big decisions Have you had to make that have affected your career and private life? (Music Business/Challenges)

The radical one was changing my partner in the company. Mostly when there have been changes in collaborations, it has been quite painless and in a good spirit. But of course, if there has been a suspicion of something criminal or something causing distrust, it must be noticed as soon as possible and put a stop to it.

LOUHIMO: How have you dealt with situations like that? (Music Business/Challenge)

LYYTINEN: I have tried to get away from the situation as peaceful way as possible. For example, if there has been a tight situation, such as not getting the fees or something. Then the best approach would be to try to get personal contact to the person and try to make them understand how this affects others' lives as well. I have seen it all and sometimes the fees were not paid to me because of a company gone into bankruptcy. Sometimes I have had to also use debt company's services to get my money back. In those kinds of situations, I have had to react without emotions and be like the hardboiled businesswoman and not the sensitive artist.

LOUHIMO: Do you have your own lawyer to help you with legal issues and contracts? (Music Business)

LYYTINEN: I have rarely used any legal help, but when in need, I have always used different lawyers, depending on the situation. Of course, sometimes there is a need for a lawyer, to be specific, for an entertainment lawyer, to help out with reading through the contracts.

LOUHIMO: Do you know where to get easily legal help for musicians?

LYYTINEN: Well, for example *Suomen Muusikkojenliitto Ry* offers legal help for free if you are a member. That I would very much recommend using. Other than that I do not have other tips.

LOUHIMO: How have your decisions in your career affected your financial life?

LYYTINEN: It has been in both ways, good and bad. Making one decision and hoping it is the right one. There was a time I put 15 000 euros for a marketing campaign, so taking risk like that would not have necessarily been worth it. Big labels have a bigger volume with their dozens of artists, but I am alone, so the risk is bigger. And especially during the pandemic people were very nervous how to use money and the uncertainty affected the budgets. Practical risks had to be taken and control of those risks.

LOUHIMO: What is important while building a solo career, marketing or what?

LYYTINEN: It begins with keeping the product in “good shape”. And as we all know there are artist factories making OK artists. But for me, music comes first, and it should be excellent, and you should deserve your place in the music industry by that. Then everything else supports this “core reason”, the music. Music and the music business are two different things, and this is the reality.

LOUHIMO: If you have a good product to market, for example, a tour coming up, how would you start marketing it? (Music Business)

LYYTINEN: Before social media “the jungle drum was singing” so to say and the product talked to itself, like the rumors that were like, “Hey, this is so cool stuff, we got to go listen to it”. But now social media is very important - Youtube, Tiktok, and other fast platforms to advertise your products for free. Still, some people use print media as well. Then they buy advertisement space in the digital and/or print media platforms.

LOUHIMO: Do you use marketing offices for marketing?

LYYTINEN: Sometimes yes, on some occasions, I buy a marketing package from a media house or a PR agent. But I should try a marketing office too, good idea. But it is expensive, always must keep that in mind.

LOUHIMO: What have you learned in your career?

LYYTINEN: I have learned that keeping your goal in your mind and focus on it, is very important. Because you will receive offers, that can take you away from your goal. To say “No”, has been a very important lesson for me. Offers can also take you to a path for things that are new, and interesting. But keeping focus on what you are doing is very important. Also, there might come up surprises. You cannot foresee how things go or plan everything to the final form, because you do not know how things will go. But sometimes you might get lucky.

LOUHIMO: How have you maintained your career?

LYYTINEN: Working constantly and keeping continuance on what I have been working for. I really have not had any vacation for twenty years. Some short ones yes, but no longer vacation, such as half a year or a year. Always on the road, so to speak. This is a lifestyle, rather than a job, and if you are not in the industry, it is quite impossible to understand what this job includes. Keeping up the “flame” in this job is important. Even during the pandemic, there was always something going on. As a performing artist, it is important to hold on to the audience, and doing the shows. If I would have a longer break, it might cause me a lack of motivation to go on doing shows again. And that is what I do not want.

LOUHIMO: How has your career choice affected your identity? (Artist Identity)

LYYTINEN: Growing up with two brothers has made me feel comfortable to get along with guys very well. The majority of my colleagues are guys. This is why I identify myself as more of a tomboy, so to speak. Of course, there are great female colleagues as well, but mostly the industry has been more or less dominated by males. So, I can find some kind of male identity in me, this is what I mean.

LOUHIMO: What do you want to warn about in the music business? (Music business)

LYYTINEN: When you start to get success, you start to be surrounded by “vultures”, and those are the people you should avoid. The “vultures” are the people

you cannot trust when things go bad in your life, but when things are good, there are lots of them surrounding you.

LOUHIMO: What do “vultures” do?

LYYTINEN: They come to give you advice on how you should pursue your career, giving possibly empty promises on how to make it in this business. Some can offer strange projects and deals. They can vary a lot. Of course, there are good offers as well, but they need to be considered carefully. But then there are people who just want to use you and get something out of your position.

LOUHIMO: Do you have something else in your mind that you consider important in building a solo career?

LYYTINEN: Collaborative relations are very important. I have a good team and good connections. Connecting in this business is very important.

LOUHIMO: Who is responsible of your look? (Music Business/Artist identity)

LYYTINEN: I style myself. I do not make my clothes, but I have certain stores that I use, and I find clothes from my trips abroad.

LOUHIMO: How important do you think a look and image are?

LYYTINEN: I think it is important, and since I was a little girl, I have been interested in makeup, dressing up, and accessories. I have always been interested in good-looking clothes and guitars. Like I said before I think the music must be good, but also there must be something good visually for the audience as well. I think it is very important too. As an example, back in time, *Jimi Hendrix* used to wear cool clothes, guys were in their tailormade suits, and divas were in their glamour dresses. I like to dress up bravely, but not too exposing way, but I could still do it even more bravely. Age brings more encouragement to dress the way I want.

Appendix 4. Interview with Sani (Saija Aartela)

Interviewer: Noora Louhimo

Date: 30.05.2022

LOUHIMO: How did your childhood affect your decision to become a musician?

SANI: My first memory is from the time I was in the first grade, and I was forced to sing in front of people on the stairs of the Court House (Raatihuone). The music-oriented schools were established in Hämeenlinna at the time I was going to the third grade and my parents put me there automatically. There and then started an intensive singing and rehearsing in different choirs. The music class offered a safe place to express myself and there was a very interesting teacher. The teacher kept it fun and interesting to learn music besides all the other subjects. In the fourth grade, I started piano lessons at the Music College of Hämeenlinna and I did all the basic studies there.

I was about seventeen years old when I got into the classical singing study line. I had two teachers Sirpa Sippola and Tiia Freud who were successful opera singers, and they were very strict as teachers. I did the basic studies of classical singing as well. Back then I was a soprano singer, now I am an alto singer. During that time my first band started to get together, it was called Naked Blame. We did kind of brit-pop style, and I still remember some of the melodies of our songs. We even did some gigs, for example at legendary *Rämyrock*. I had that band for a few years, and we did original songs.

Singing, choir activity, and playing piano continued while I went to college. After I graduated, I wondered what I should do, because with my grades I did not have the opportunity to get into any academic institution. By chance, there had arrived a letter to my parents from the Music institution of Orivesi. There was described the content of the school's music studies, that there was a chance to finish the

studies in music. The school was in collaboration with the Conservatory of Tampere, so the supplement of music studies was very wide. There I could study pop and jazz music, salsa and samba music, and everything in a year. I got a book from there that inspired me to pursue a music career.

When I finished that school, I applied to the Pop and Jazz Conservatory of Oulunkylä for the singing study line. I remember that spring there were a lot of singer applicants, but I got in. There happened an unfortunate switch, because they took in a bass player and I lost my spot, but one of the teachers still took me in as a side student. I got to study there for a while and my activity there was part-time. In a way, I was lucky not to get in, because the methods to learn were kind of against my way of thinking. I felt that everyone was taught to sound the same and I wanted to do my own thing in my own style, not to be turned into anything else. I wanted to graduate and wondered if there would be any place to go study in Hämeenlinna, all my relationships were there anyway. I applied to Fredrika Wetterhoff's Institution of Handicraft and Arts. I got in and studied there for 3 years making textiles for design magazines.

In my last year of studies, I ended up at a music producer, Rauli Eskolin's studio, in Hämeenlinna. Currently, he is working in Helsinki and has produced bands like CMX and other Finnish bands. There I worked with him doing music for adverts until he said that we should start doing my solo material with more techno vibes. "How about starting a solo career?" I recall us writing two songs and when we had finished, Rauli said he was going to contact *Asko Kallonen*, who was the Production Manager of *BMG Music Finland*. I thought it was a great idea and we went to have a meeting with him.

Asko was interested and said there was a group of people, a band with Marko Kolehmainen (Maki), Alex Ojasti (Alex), and Vera (Heidi Puurula), who needed another singer. He asked if I would be interested in listening to some of their songs. He played songs like *Tähtikaaren taa* and other songs that ended up being on the debut album of AIKAKONE in 1995. Then Asko asked if I wanted to go to *Kaapelitehdas* to rehearse and try out the songs with the band. I went there together with Asko and it was clear to me right from the moment I met the band. We got along immediately, and we had so much fun. I heard the songs they had

would be successful because there was so much hit material. I had never been a person into techno music, I was more into rock music and went to rock concerts. Techno music style had just arrived in Finland, and I graduated from Wetterhoff's Institution. At that time, I went to *Kaapelitehdas* in Helsinki to rehearse every day and my life was there a lot. I knew that now things were starting to roll fast, and I had to move to Helsinki.

After the rollercoaster lifestyle, everyone felt like having a break in 2003. So, we all took a break doing our own things outside the band. Maki concentrated on producing for other artists. Me and Alex wrote songs for other artists as well. Then I started to think about my own songs, I wanted to do some other style in music. Then my path with Rauli came together again and he started to produce my solo music. I have done only 3 solo albums because *AIKAKONE* has taken most of my time. Now I am working on my 4th solo album and gathering songs. I do not have to hurry anywhere; I have had all the possible awards from Finland so now I can do my music in peace. Being successful is always fun but I am not in a hurry anymore. There is always work to be done.

LOUHIMO: Why did you want to become a solo artist?

SANI: I have done so much with *AIKAKONE* since 1995 and even my original idea before the band was to be a solo artist, but I see it as a good thing that I started my career with a group and not as a solo artist. After getting all that experience in a band and of how artists get treated by big record labels, I felt more comfortable doing my own thing. We as a band got to work with different labels. I wanted to have a variation from techno music. We were told that when it is about techno music, the songs are always sung as *playback*. The audience always assumed us singing with playback. Even to this day, if I sing well live at a show, they do not believe I sing live. If there is a good mix and good circumstances, it is possible. There is no need to prove anything, but I like to improvise and sometimes things do not go like wanted. Then I like the band to take more freedom in playing the songs. Some can play a longer guitar solo or so. I like quite a natural thing going on with the band. It was such a crazy ride with *AIKAKONE* and always

having the same songs with the same *backtracks*, so I wanted to have some variation.

LOUHIMO: Did you have a vision of what you want to bring out as a solo artist?

SANI: Yes, I had. *AIKAKONE* material and its theme is to “linger in the space” and there is a certain philosophy, of not going too deep from the surface. I always say in a playful way that *AIKAKONE* is like a “My Little Pony” band, easy to listen to for everyone. But when a person grows up, one wants to do something deeper and interpret those feelings. We in the band have never quit even if we had disagreements about some things. We realize that we have a quite golden thing here, giving nostalgia to people from the 90s, and it still works. Even there was the pandemic and all, but now the venues are full again. After hard times, people have a craving for happy, easy music to listen to and party to. *AIKAKONE* is a good source of income for everyone in the band.

LOUHIMO: How do your roles differ from being a solo artist and a band member?

SANI: As a solo artist I can decide everything myself. I do not have to ask anything from anyone, but of course, I can ask the opinions of my solo band members and producers. In *AIKAKONE* the important person in the band is the creator of the band, Maki. The band was his idea and then we approved some of the songs and our lyrics. We have always tried to do things ourselves as much as possible and we did the songs together as a band. The responsibility of the songwriting was on Maki, as it should be. He is very accurate and does not want anyone else to write music for our band, and it is totally fine for me. So, when I do my solo music, I decide what material I want to record and follow my sense of what song could have radio potential. Those are the differences, and it is also a relief.

LOUHIMO: Where does your need for autocracy come from?

SANI: It comes from the fact that I still have so much more to give, and I have always written music for myself and for others. There was no space for a songwriter in *AIKAKONE*. And I want to develop, and it takes time to do it and write songs.

LOUHIMO: What has been the process of building up your solo career?

SANI: It is a different situation for a solo artist who does not have anything else than their solo career. They must release music more often and keep up in the music business. My situation is beneficial in a way that I have a steady, primary band, and I have not taken any stress about releasing a solo album on a yearly basis, instead, I make it when I have time and I feel like it. I do not force myself to do any of my solo stuff. I have had to force myself to make lyrics at a fast pace. But sometimes it is a good thing that I have been given a deadline and I have had to do it in time. I am used to that with AIKAKONE.

But then when one wants to do things in a totally opposite way, they can do it in peace, and there are those people that I have found at the beginning of my career participating, such as Kari Hynninen and Maki who was producing my second solo album *Pedonkynnet* and with releasing it. Fortunately, I had Rauli Eskolin taking the music toward a natural sound, and it gave me the confidence to do the solo material whenever it felt right. The pandemic changed my life from a music business point of view, economically and in every kind of way, in good and bad. Now I think I do not have to work so hard all the time, but I can concentrate on my music, I can do it in small pieces and see in a year if there is material enough for an album. I do not usually take too much on my shoulders, but I do it in small pieces and later check which one of the songs will be worked on. It might cost a little more, but the artist pays anyway in the end.

LOUHIMO: What kind of team do you have?

SANI: I have always had a new production team for one album, never used the same team twice. The reason is because I want the albums to differ from each other. I do not have management behind me, because I want to manage myself as much as possible. I keep close contact with the band and the PR person when the release is to be planned and about to happen, and when I have found a good collaborator like that, they have stayed beside me for years. It is clear, that when one starts to build a solo career, the person who is going to take it forward, believes in the artist and is not there only for the job. That has an immense effect

on the artist's career. At the moment, I have new musicians playing on the album, the promoter stays the same and it does not matter which company is the distributor as long as it happens. I have had the same promoter for the last few albums.

LOUHIMO: What is the promoter's job description?

SANI: The Promoter's job varies depending on the situation. My Promoter is an old school promoter, who wants to do his business face-to-face with all the collaborators and take the music to the radio and to the media by conversations with them before and after the release. He wants to sustain the connections for the future. Some promoters only send e-mails and send the music in a digital format, but they might get passed, if they do not go to meet the people in the industry. There are not so many people left, who have direct access to the radios, because it is not in the fashion anymore. That is why it is worth of gold kind of work.

Talking about my solo material, I have not had big record labels supporting me, but I have worked with a smaller team. Usually, a smaller record label has released my music, so there is not a big label behind me.

LOUHIMO: Have you had different labels releasing your albums?

SANI: Yes, I have always had different labels releasing each album. The reason is that there have been so many years between the releases that the staff and equipment have changed in the label. The tasks change among the staff and when this happens, there appear new faces. I have noticed that in big record labels, this kind of change happens a lot. If there are no wanted results, then the staff will change fast.

LOUHIMO: What big decisions have you had to make? And how have these decisions affected your career and personal relationships? (Sacrifices)

SANI: If I were only a solo artist, it would be more liberating to release music more regularly. But because I have the other band, there have been a lot of situations that I have had to wait to avoid releasing music simultaneously. They do not go always as expected, and then some things pop up. My priority is *AIKAKONE*, because it is my first "kid", and it has to be done well. So that is that but today it is a little bit different situation, and it is possible to negotiate the schedules for

when to release my solo material and when *AIKAKONE* release their material. Everything is surprisingly well. In the beginning of my career, I had the opportunity to take the way to start a solo career or go with a band. I felt working in a group more comfortable and did not want to be alone. I have always felt working in a group is more important to me rather than doing things solo. One can always wonder if making solo material is a risk but, in my opinion, it is wealth to be cherished. I do not see it the way that one should concentrate on just one thing. It can be some record label's opinion, but I do not care about that.

LOUHIMO: How have your decisions affected your financial life?

SANI: *AIKAKONE* does not take a break, we do shows that are offered and we do not make plans when we do tours. When I do solo shows with a band or as a duet, it is financially better for me today. But now that I have done my career for 25 years and *AIKAKONE* has been around for almost 30 years, the game can change at any moment. Now that we have done a lot of work to get our prize up, we do not have to do so many shows, maybe.

LOUHIMO: Your answer underlines the fact that being a solo artist can be financially profitable.

SANI: Yes, it is. But at the same time, one must be careful not to get conned in this industry. In the 90s there were a lot of takers from *AIKAKONE* as well, those are times that I do not wish to remember. There have been and there is a lot of mediators.

LOUHIMO: I have a question about that. What do you want to warn about in the music business?

SANI: I want to warn all the artists of today to read carefully the deals and make sure everything agreed is in writing. Make sure to see all the documents about the money transfer between the agencies and the customers, and that they are factual. Above this there have been cases, that someone has agreed on a binding deal for a TV format for years, after having all kinds of promises. Then the artist has been forgotten totally. It can be long-term artists or professionals who help newcomers. It has bothered me the last few years to see artists get used. Trust is a big thing. To be able to trust someone when making big decisions. One must be very careful.

LOUHIMO: What have you learned in your career?

SANI: I have learned to do what feels right and to believe in finding my listeners who like my music, and not to change by someone else's vision. That can irritate big record labels a lot. Back in the day, we came into the business with *AIKAKONE* with our own music and our own look, no one has built us, and no one has had a grip on us in such a way. It applies to my solo career in the same way that if some label is not interested it does not matter, the music goes forward anyway. The big wrong in this industry is that one does not need to expect their songs to be playing on the major radio stations if one is not working in the big record labels. They have their own deals. One must believe in their work and that the songs will be played on some radios enough. I would like to try working with a bigger record label because it makes it possible to make bigger shows with bigger volumes. But there are always the two sides to it. There are always the mediators involved.

LOUHIMO: How have accomplished keeping up your solo career?

SANI: I think it is the fact that my music has played enough on local radios and at *Yleisradio*, and I have done a lot of shows with my solo material around Finland. It is a similar thing to *AIKAKONE* doing shows at nightclubs a lot. Working a lot and taking a break at all, constantly promoting the music in that way. It is a continuum, not letting the engine get cold. Otherwise, one will get cold.

LOUHIMO: What is the most important thing in building a solo career?

SANI: The premises for a solo artist in today's music industry is totally different than 30 years ago. And the reason is because of social media is here to stay. Promotion happens in social media today but back in the day promotion happened through the ladies' magazines and several interviews with different magazines. Promotional events were arranged at big grocery stores like Prisma and Citymarket, we were having signing sessions there and selling the CDs. The change is so big these days, labels are just observing how much your social media is followed and how many clicks have been made to some media platforms of their artists. Today, one must have an extremely good team to support the artist, and especially a social media producer. One does not have to do

everything by themselves, I used to be that way, but not anymore. One must try to give responsibility to others as well and trust that they do their job. Keeping up a solo career requires constant hard work because the financial maintenance comes from the shows. I do things in diverse ways like shows in pubs, nightclubs, and in churches, there are always different kinds of audiences.

LOUHIMO: How has your career choice affected your identity?

SANI: I do not lie much if I say not much or at all. I Think about the fact that what kind of person I have been before and during my career, and how the career would have changed me as a person. The fact of not letting the career change me. There are sad stories about people changing along the way into more cynics or their personalities totally changing. One must try to be themselves and hold on to that, it is the easiest way. Then the identity does not change in any way. One can learn to do things in different ways from the experiences they get but I have not seen any major change in my identity. I have always been myself and have not pretended to be someone else, and that has been a key factor in things going well.