



The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast

Ep104: Mental Health in Music: Maggie Szabo

You're listening to Episode 104 of the Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast.

Hello! You're listening to [Episode 104: Mental Health in Music: Maggie Szabo](#).

I'm your host, Suz, a mindset + productivity coach helping music professionals get clear on their goals, priorities, and next steps all while decreasing overwhelm and avoiding burnout.

Today's episode is the second installment of our four-part series to highlight mental health in the music industry. Each week I'll be speaking with a special guest to shine a light on various aspects of mental health and how we can all make a greater effort to protect not only our own mental health, but also do our part to enact change within the industry in hopes of doing away with toxic behaviors and narratives sewn into its history.

There are no sponsors for these episodes, nor are there downloadable extras. I wanted these episodes to stand alone so we can focus on listening and reflecting as each week's call to action. The show notes of each episode will have links to additional resources to get help and/or learn better ways to manage your mental health.

For today's episode, you can find all 'rocksources,' including links to learn more about our esteemed guest by going to <http://therockstaradvocate.com/ep104>. Today we are speaking with artist, songwriter, producer and performer, Maggie Szabo!

Based in Los Angeles, Canadian-born Maggie Szabo has recently released a series of high-profile singles, remixes and EPs that have put her on the map as a 2021 artist to watch. Her recent single, "Worth The Weight," was exclusively premiered by Rolling Stone India and the accompanying music video was premiered by CelebMix. Her music has been featured on prominent Spotify playlists including New Music Friday Canada, Fresh Dance Pop, Gym Workout Motivation, New Music Friday Switzerland, New Music Friday Deutschland and many more.

Maggie has quickly become one of the most sought after songwriters and vocalists for DJs and notable networks like E!, Disney, NBC, and Netflix, which have all placed her music in their productions. She's been spotlighted by The Advocate, Billboard, Popdust, Huffington Post, Ryan Seacrest, Perez Hilton, and EARMILK, just to name a few.

I asked her to be a part of this month's series to discuss her commitment to fitness as a way to manage her mental health, as well as highlight her work with the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, as she uses her music and online presence to conquer social injustices. Her power ballad, "Don't Give Up," is a beautifully authentic and heartfelt song dedicated to transgender youth around the world who live in fear and suffer from rejection and exclusion. It was premiered by Billboard and praised by media outlets such as PopDust and Huffington Post. Proceeds from the song are donated to empowering homeless LGBTQ+ youth.

Be sure to visit the show notes page for additional mental health resources, specifically aimed at supporting those the LGBTQI community.

Maggie is a prime example of an artist who uses her art to say something with purpose and build true community. Dive in with me as Maggie shares her journey and how she's managed the ups and downs of building a career with intention and heart by showing up each and every day and how you can, too.

Suz: Maggie, thank you so much for being here.

Maggie: Thank you for having me. It's a pleasure

Suz: Yeah, I'm such a fan. I've been digging into your music recently and it's very clear to me why you've been able to accomplish so many things. It's just really great, and all of the links for everybody to enjoy are in the show notes.

And we're going to get into all of that, but I shared with our listeners all of the important milestones in your career, but I'd love for our audience to hear from you, what would you like our audience to know about you and about your career as an artist?

Maggie: Honestly, I would just say, I'm in LA. I came out here just to chase my dream as people would say, and I've been here, almost seven years and I'm doing what I love and it's just been because of my love for it and dedication and my hard work, but at the end of the day, I'm just doing my thing out here.

Suz: Yeah. I mean, can't agree more. It's one thing to love it, but it's knowing that it takes that hard work and then when you still love it, in spite of that, that's gravy.

Maggie: I know anything worth chasing like that I feel like there's going to be struggles and it's going to take a lot of time and stress sometimes and effort, but at the end of the day, if you feel really strongly about something it's worth it.

Suz: Absolutely. One of the things that resonated with me most, when I dove into your background and your career, was that you have a larger purpose and intention behind your artistry. You do a lot of work with social justice and inclusion, and I know that that's very close to your heart and the organizations that you partner with.

Finding inclusion, both in and out of the music industry, I know is something that matters to you, but why is it so important to you to do this work? Why not just say, "You know what? This is hard enough. I need to just focus on my music and get it out, and when I'm rich and famous, I'll donate to some causes." What matters to you about the work that you do?

Maggie: Well, there's two things. A) I just feel like it's so important if you have a platform, I think you should use that as an opportunity to spread awareness for things that really matter and things that are near and dear to your heart and B) Yeah, this business is tough, but one of the things that makes it easier is knowing that I can be out there and I can be supporting causes and communities and people that I love.

I feel like that balances out the difficult days because at the end of the day, I know there's a greater purpose than just me and my music. And obviously that's so important to me, but there was also a whole other side of things that I feel very motivated to spread awareness for, and really it makes everything even more worth it.

And, of course, I love writing and I love singing, and there's just so many things that I do love. I love the LGBTQ community. I love equality and inclusion in general for everyone. So, it's something that's really important to me, and I want to keep fighting for that.

Suz: Yeah. I absolutely resonate with that. You know, this is The Music-Preneur Mindset Podcast, but it's under the umbrella of The Rock/Star Advocate, and we talk a lot about the importance of advocacy work and about speaking up and, as you said, using that platform.

I know that you've worked with organizations like the Trans Chorus of Los Angeles, for those that are listening that want to get involved, that want to use their platform, but they're just like, "Oh, what do I do?" I think that's the hardest thing for people is like getting started.

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What advice or tips would you have for getting started for finding causes that matter to you and getting involved? What would you tell people about that?

Maggie: Well, I think the fact that you're even thinking of that is a great first step and it means that you care and it means you want to make a difference any way you can.

I think it's really important to dig deep and find the causes that really matter to you because that's gonna make you fight for those things even more, and it's more authentic and people can feel that. I mean, there's so many things out there that I feel like we need to shed light on and spread awareness about.

And so I think if anyone who's thinking about, what is it something that they should be fighting for? I really do think it's important you find something that you are so passionate about because people feel that. And when they feel your energy and they feel your passion it inspires them to also want to jump on board and try and create change as well.

Suz: Your song "Don't Give Up" was such an inspiration and has such a powerful message behind it, it didn't shock me that it got so much praise, and it got so many media outlets talking about it - I mean, Billboard, Huffington Post - what did it feel like to create a song like that and to put it out there?

Maggie: I'm not going to lie, it was a little scary at first because I had never released a music video about a topic like that. The music video for "Don't Give Up" follows the story of a young girl who struggles with her gender identity.

It was the first time I kind of did something like that, and I raised my voice for something that I really care about and believe in, which is not only the LGBTQ community, but the trans community and trans youth specifically.

So, yeah, it was really scary, but I knew it meant a lot to me, and so I kind of had to put that aside. And that's how I actually ended up meeting the Trans Chorus of LA, so it all worked out the way that it should. I was able to meet them, and I've made so many near and dear friends from meeting the Trans Chorus of LA. I think together we've created a really positive impact and we've performed that song and we've used that song kind of as a way to share the message of the Trans Chorus of LA as well.

Suz: That's so important. I think one of the biggest takeaways there that I hope our listeners have is that it's important to have something to say, whatever that might be, to find the courage to say it because that's when you're going to open up these opportunities to collaborate, to

meet new people, to have other opportunities for working on bigger projects together, because if you're not saying anything, what are people grabbing onto? So I think it's wonderful to use your voice in that way.

Maggie: Exactly what you said, it's so much easier sometimes to just sit back and say nothing, but if everyone did that, we wouldn't have any change at all. So it does take strength and it takes courage for anyone who wants to stand up and raise their voice, but that's how we make progress and that's how we make change.

Suz: You know, it's been a difficult year for everyone - talking about change and dealing with all that. I know right now we're in the midst of Mental Health Awareness Month, and we're definitely going to touch upon that, but how has it been just emotionally and mentally for you over the last year with your career growing, but I'm sure also just the changes that we've all been through in general - that balance, and even maybe that dichotomy, what has that been like for you? If you don't mind sharing.

Maggie: It's definitely been a struggle. I've always said though, the best art comes from the darkest places sometimes. The last year has been tough for everyone. I'm from Canada, and so I haven't been able to go home and see my family and visit my parents, and so that part has been a struggle. But also I've tried kind of flipping it and taking the positives out of the whole experience.

For me, I kind of just took it as like the last year to focus on writing my own music and just for my project. Because up until 2020, I was running around and going to different sessions and writing for other artists and for different projects and also juggling my own stuff. And it was great. It was fun, but now it's kind of allowed me to focus just on my stuff and building up my career as a solo artist, so I've really been taking that as an opportunity.

Suz: You know, we've discussed how important fitness is to you and having that daily, or at least weekly kind of routine. How has that played a role in just getting through this year? You know, have you turned to fitness to kind of work through a lot of stuff? How important is that routine for you to be able to focus on the work and focus on achieving your goals?

Maggie: For me, it's everything. When I first moved to LA, I didn't know anyone, and I was moving from a small town to a really big city, and I knew it was going to be overwhelming - and the whole immigration thing coming from Canada.

So I knew it was gonna be a struggle, and especially as an artist, you're essentially your own boss and you're running your own business and, with that, there's not a lot of structure unless you put that structure on yourself.

So I kind of told myself when I got out here I'm gonna wake up early and I'm going to go to the gym every morning, and it's going to be at the same time so that I start to build a schedule and something daily that I have to get out of bed for. It just gives me a routine, and it helps me stay organized.

Also, it was a great way for me to network and meet new people since I was new here, so that has been really great to keep myself accountable and to create a schedule for myself. And then on top of that, for me, it's my form of meditation, and it's my form of mental health. I always leave feeling better about the situations I'm in and I feel better about myself.

Especially the last year with COVID, obviously gyms were closed and a lot of people had a hard time, figuring out like, "Oh my God, what am I going to do?" I still made a point to have a routine. I was either running outside. I was working out in the park. But I really do like fitness and that whole community, for me, is super important. Not only because I love it, but it is really important for my own mental health.

Suz: Yeah, absolutely. I mean, what do you do on those days that you wake up and you're like, "I don't want to do it."

Do you have anything that talk yourself into it? Is there like a discipline to it or do you kind of give yourself some grace some days? What happens in those situations?

Maggie: Well, the first thing I always do is I put on my gym clothes, 'cause if I put anything else on I'm like one step closer to not going. And then on days when I'm really not feeling it, I'll just tell myself, "I'll just go and I'll go stretch," or something like that. What always ends up happening is I go, and even though I had the intention of "I'll just stretch" I go there and everyone else is working out and then I'm like, "Okay, fine. I want to work out, too."

So on days like that, I don't put the pressure on myself, so that I just show up. And I feel like with anything, whether it's the gym or with different opportunities - if I'm going to the studio and meeting someone new, I think showing up and not having like, "Oh my God, I have to accomplish this," or "I have to do this," 'cause that can be really scary and it can deter us from even showing up at all, but I think just showing up and then taking it from there is the most important step.

Suz: I love that so much. It is really important as you said, just do the showing up and I think you're absolutely right when all that extra added pressure is there, it's really easy to walk away from it all, but if we can take those expectations off of it... I used to say that to people all the time, when it came to going to networking events, especially if you happen to be a very introverted person - just show up. Just go give yourself 15 minutes, if you still really hate it, you can leave, but see if you can talk to one person.

Maggie: For sure! Sometimes we're not in the mood to meet other people, or if we're having a bad day, we just want to be by ourselves. But networking events, all that stuff that can be really intimidating and scary, tell yourself, "Just go, show up, order a water and give yourself 20 minutes. And that's it! That's all you have to do."

Suz: Exactly. I really respect the discipline that you have, not just for your physical workouts, but understanding, as you said, the bigger picture that you are an entrepreneur, and that this is a business. You do need structure and a routine, and that takes a lot of focus and willpower to make happen.

So, my other question for you is, in that same vein, you have been able to build and grow your career a lot in the last year or so. What do you attribute that success to? Has it been a bunch of different things? Has it just been the growth of this discipline and the consistency of showing up?

Maggie: It's for sure a lot of different things. But at the end of the day, the most important thing is just continuing to show up and not giving up, because I've been here almost seven years and there's been so many days where I could have just called it quits, packed up my bags and gone back home. Once you do that, you're definitely not going to make it, you know?

Even if it's a day or a week where I just need to step back and recollect myself, that's fine. We all need those moments. But I think just really not giving up and not quitting. And it's amazing because sometimes. I know with my friends and people in the music community and entertainment in general and creatives, it's really easy to look back on the last month and be like, "Oh my God, I feel like I haven't accomplished anything."

But, when you look back on the last year, or since you moved to LA, or since you started this project, you can really see the growth, and I think it's important to take a step back and look at that and really take in the accomplishments and what you've done and what you've achieved, because I think that helps motivate you moving forward.

And sometimes it's really difficult to see things microscopically, when you're taking a close look in you can't really see the progress. But when you take a step out, I think it's really important to do that.

Suz: Absolutely. And talking about looking back at the bigger picture and the longer journey of your career, you mentioned before you've done some collaborative works and now you're kind of focusing more on solo things. Have there been times in your career where you've kind of hit a fork in the road and it's been like, "I think maybe my sound is changing or my motivation is changing or I want to write about something different?"

Have you been at those forks in the road and how do you handle those moments where you feel like you need to pivot and you're not really sure, "Oh, do I do this? What do I do?" What is that like?

Maggie: That's a great question. I think for my journey one of the most difficult decisions for me as an artist was figuring out my sound. And I say that because I grew up listening to so many different kinds of music and I loved soul, and I loved R&B, and I loved jazz, and I loved straight up pop, so loving all of these things, it was really difficult for me to focus on one direction that I should go in.

And not to say that you can only pick one and you can't experiment with others - I've definitely taken all of those influences into my sound now, but when I first got to LA, I kind of didn't really know my sound as an artist and who I was, and that, I think, was the most difficult thing for me to figure out.

I think it's important for decisions like that to not feel pressured to have to make a decision that big overnight. I think it's okay to take time, and I think it's okay to spend the time learning about yourself learning about what you love and kind of seeing how the universe reacts to that.

And one of the ways that I kind of really honed in on who I am as an artist is I took the time, I wrote a lot, and I was performing one night for an audience and in the audience was a DJ named Schiller and he came up to me after my performance and he asked if I would work on his album with him.

Up until then, I had always just done pretty acoustic soul music, and I always loved pop electronic stuff I just never really knew how to apply what I was doing with that sound 'cause it felt so different. But when I started writing for Schiller's album, it was kind of an epiphany because he's so far electronic, but he started playing these tracks and I was so inspired by

them. And literally all I did was I sang and I wrote what I normally do over his tracks, and I loved it.

It was really exhilarating and freeing. And it was this new sound I was experimenting with, and that kind of helped me shape my sound because I ended up writing for a bunch of other DJs and I really loved the fun, pop, up tempo stuff. Obviously I love to work out, and I love being able to write music that I would hear at the gym, and stuff that people would dance to.

So just taking the time and being open to those opportunities and saying yes to things really opened up my eyes as far as who I am and you know, that led me down the road to the sound that I've created for myself today.

Suz: I mean, it sounds like it's taken a lot of trust in your own voice and in your own intuition to be like, "Maybe it doesn't make sense or maybe I've never done it before, but I need to go follow this." That's something that I hear from so many artists when they're starting out as they struggle with finding their sound, "What do I do?"

And I think the way you explained it, I mean, it really is a journey. It's just taking those opportunities that feel right, that excite you, that intrigued you and let it show you rather than you trying to find it.

Maggie: Yeah. Sometimes the universe will just show you, and I feel like that's kind of what happened with me. Like I was just open to things and open to opportunities and that's how I ended up finding really who I was.

Suz: Absolutely. I know with your singles, you know, we talked about "Don't Give Up" you had a lot of success with "Worth the Weight" and weight spelled W E I G H T for our listeners who can't see the title.

You have gained so much success - over 15 million views on YouTube and streams on Spotify. You've been able to get your sound out to so many people and still speak your mind and get your messages heard. When you reach that level of an audience does it empower you to continue to speak more of your mind because now you're like, "Oh, I've got people listening. Let me say what I want to say?"

Does it intimidate you because so many people are listening? Like, what is that like? Because I know for a lot of our listeners who haven't yet reached that level, they don't know what to anticipate. How has it been for you with that kind of growth?

Maggie: I feel like, for me, it's both, because yeah, I'm like, "Wow, I've created this little community of people that I feel are like-minded and we want to fight for things and create change," and people who also love my music, which is such an honor, so it does motivate me to want to bring up things and issues that are important to me in hopes that other people learn about things.

But it's also intimidating because it is the internet and sometimes we can get paralyzed by saying the wrong thing or coming across badly or all these different things that it's fear at the end of the day.

So it can be a little bit paralyzing, but, for me, I've always just told myself as long as my intentions are good, and I want to create something positive out of the message that I'm sharing, I have to just speak out and express what I want to say and whatever happens, happens. But as long as I know going into it, that my intentions are good that's the most important thing for me.

Suz: And after you put something out there, you know, so many people have heard it, obviously that's always going to come with trolls and naysayers, and stuff like that. Do you put any boundaries on yourself around how you handle that? Do you not look at the comments or, you know, do you have any sort of practices that you stick to, or do you just go about your day and it is what it is?

Maggie: I mean, so far I haven't had anything where I'm like, "Oh my God, I made a giant mistake and I need to take something down." Luckily. But, when we had the video come out with the Trans Chorus of LA, and I was posting those videos on my Instagram and on YouTube, there were a lot of negative comments about the trans community and that was A) really heartbreaking and B) it was kind of me figuring out how to navigate that and do I delete the comments? What do I do?

And for me, I didn't want to delete the comments. I would understand why someone else would want to. I'm not a trans person. I could understand if a trans person was posting stuff and there were these people saying really rude things. They don't want to read that negativity.

But for me, I felt like you know what? They can post these things, and my response is going to be out of love and education and just to try and open up their eyes, because obviously these people that are writing these negative things, they're just not aware and they have their own growth and self-learning to do. So instead of just deleting their comments, I wanted to take that as an opportunity to just show love and hope that they could grow and understand that not

everyone is just like them and people are different and people feel different and they love who they love and they associate themselves with different things. So I think for me, it was really important to just try and respond instead of delete.

Suz: I think that's so important to share with everybody, because especially as we're in Mental Health Awareness Month, you know, as you said, everyone's gonna have their own way of handling it and we have to do what feels right for us. And if you're able to be in a position to educate and lead with compassion, then do that.

And if it does become too much for you, or if this is something that is only going to harm you, then delete it. And I love that that's your approach. It's like, you have to do what's best for you.

Maggie: Yeah cause if you're opening up your Instagram and there's these horrible things and they're attacking you and you're waking up and it's really negatively affecting your mental health, obviously that's not healthy. So I think for everyone it's different, and you have to figure out what works best for you.

Suz: One of the other posts on your Instagram that I really resonated with was when the Grammy nominations came out. And you had mentioned, as I know my colleagues and I were discussing this as well, that, you know, there were no female producers nominated. And you had mentioned "That's why I'm pushing forward and I'm making it a point to learn and get better at producing my own music," which you have done which is very commendable. Is that a piece that motivates you to be more hands-on with your music?

Maggie: For sure. You know, since I've been in this business, which has been a long time, I've noticed the difference between men and women in this business, just like in a lot of other career paths. I've always been aware of that and I've always wanted to try and kind of fight against that and I've always been a champion for like strong, independent women. You know, I want to make a change that way. I want to stand up to that, so especially over the last year, we've been spending more time at home and I've always known that female producers there are very few of them.

And I know that because most of the producers I've worked with are men. And I've always wanted to meet other female producers, and I have, and every time I do, I love working with them. And so the last year for me was kind of just a way for me to inspire myself, to like, okay, I'm going to learn something new and I'm going to try and produce something completely on my own without anyone's help.

So that's where "Sail Away" came from. It's a song I wrote on my own, I produced on my own, and I ended up releasing on my own in March for Women's History Month.

And yeah, I mean, for me, it was just a challenge and I think it's important that sometimes we put ourselves up to those challenges because we can surprise ourselves at the end of the day.

Suz: You know, one of the things that keeps coming up for me, hearing about your journey is "showing up." Showing up and having the courage to just go after what you want. And I don't think it's an accident that your career has continued to grow as you've taken more of those chances to speak your mind, to express yourself the way you want to express yourself, to align yourself with the causes that matter to you.

I think that's really important, and I think that that's why your music and your artistry resonate with so many people, so I hope our listeners are taking notes because this is what you need to do guys if you want this to happen, this is what it takes truly.

So I know just a few days ago you released your latest music video and I'd love for you to tell people what it's about. What are you most excited about it? What should people know? Because they got to go watch it guys, the link is in the show notes, but what can you tell us about what we can expect from this video?

Maggie: The video is just a fun video with me and a couple of girls just like dancing and having our own girl party. And the song itself was written basically about breaking out of the rules and the expectations that we set on ourselves. Even if it's just for a night, like let's break those rules. And that's where the lyrics came out of and the video is definitely just a fun, girly video. We're just dancing around. I wanted to make a song that, you know, we could work out to and dance to and drive to and something that was easy for people to sing along to and hooky and that's where "My Oh My" came from.

Suz: I love it. Yeah. "My Oh My" everyone go stream it on Spotify. Go check out the new video on YouTube that was just released on the 7th. Add it to your playlists. This is going to be your summer jam, your girl's night out as we start to open back up into the world and get to see our best friends again, it's really just the perfect vibe song for that 100%.

And so what can you tell our audience about what's next? You know, what are you excited about going into the summer and what do you have in the works?

Maggie: I'm very excited for a lot of things. I have more music coming out that's been written and recorded. I just shot a music video for one of the singles that I'll be putting out in June. The

song is called "Rebuild" and the music video stars one of my near and dear friends, Catherine, who is a woman I met in the Trans Chorus of LA. And her story is so inspiring. I love her. She transitioned later on in life and she is just one of the most amazing people I know. And, I'm really excited to share her story in the music video.

So we just shot that a couple of weeks ago. So that'll be coming out in June as well. So there's just a lot of music and content and stories that I feel like are important to share.

Suz: That's amazing. Well, I cannot wait to see it. I'm such a huge fan. I'll be following along every step of the way.

Maggie, thank you so much for sharing your story with us and giving other artists a glimpse into really what it takes to grow a career. It's not easy. I know you don't do it alone. I know you've built your team as you've expanded, but as you said, at the end of the day, all of this is because of the fact that you show up, and that's really the most important part, whether you have a team or not. So thank you so much for being here. Is there anything else you'd like to share with our audience before we wrap up?

Maggie: Take care of yourself! I know, you know, the last year has been interesting, but we're here now and the future is bright, so take care of yourself, stay healthy, and keep doing what you love to do!

Suz: Amazing. And what is the best way for people to get involved in your community? Aside from streaming "My Oh My" and watching that video a hundred times, what is the best way for them to connect with you and your community?

Maggie: If you go to www.allaboutmaggie.com, you'll see a button, and you can sign up for my mailing list. I don't send out too many emails. And I'm on the socials - TikTok, Instagram, YouTube, all of the good stuff. So come say hi, and I'll say hi back and follow along.

Suz: Amazing. Guys, all the links that Maggie just mentioned are in our show notes page. Be sure to go check it out. Once again, Maggie, thank you so much for being here, and I wish you all the best this summer.

Maggie: I appreciate it. Good to talk to you.

I know it can sound trite, but showing up, just showing up, can really truly be the difference between reaching your goals and falling short. It's not about being perfect or saying the perfect

thing or having the money or knocking everything you do out of the park. It's about showing up and doing your best and doing that each and every day.

Be sure to show up to the show notes page, www.therockstaradvocate.com/ep104 to access links to additional mental health rocksources, connect with Maggie, and check out her latest video for "My Oh My."

Thank you so much for listening and I hope you'll join me next week as we continue our series of interviews for Mental Health Awareness Month all throughout May. Be sure to subscribe on your platform of choice so you don't miss a single conversation!

Until next time, Rock/Star. Keep planning, keep learning, and I hope to see you back here next week so we can get grounded to get rising! Take care.