House of Commons Women and Equalities Committee

Misogyny in Music Inquiry

Introduction

1. UK Music is the collective voice of the UK’s world-leading music industry across each region and nation of the UK. UK Music represents all sectors of the music industry – bringing them together to collaborate, campaign and champion music. UK Music promotes the music industry as a key national asset to all levels of Government, Local Authority, devolved Parliaments and the UK Parliament and publishes research on the economic and social value of music. Our membership comprises organisations representing artists, musicians, songwriters and composers, record labels, music publishers and producers, as well as collective management organisations.

2. As an organisation and as the voice of an entire sector, UK Music condemns misogyny in all forms and in any it is manifest or enabled. We seek to establish an inclusive, equitable and diverse workforce across a music industry that is representative of society and which encourages inclusive social values. We aim to tackle barriers to entry and progression within the music industry for unrepresented and under-supported groups, considering all protected characteristics, demographics and how they intersect. UK Music’s Diversity Taskforce has run a biennial workforce survey since 2016, seeking to understand the career pressures, barriers and problems that women in particular face in the music industry. Our last survey revealed that professionals identifying as women make up 49.6% of our workforce.¹ It also provided insight into where improvements are needed regarding diversity and inclusion – and highlights where positive change is already underway. Women comprise just 10% of the top 25 executives on Billboard’s 2022 music industry Power List and according to a Midia Consulting’s Women in Music 2022 report globally 67% of women claim to have witnessed pay discrepancy towards women or other non-male gendered identities in the music industry.²

3. We recognise that there is a wider cultural problem with misogyny in society which can consciously and culturally permeate into every aspect of life, and that this should be challenged. The music industry is working hard to address this in our sector and progress which was once unimaginable is continually being

¹ https://www.ukmusic.org/equality-diversity/uk-music-diversity-report-2020/
made. This drive for change must continue. We can achieve positive change by tackling instances of misogyny through transparency reporting, equality of pay and promotion, education, empowerment, ensuring gender balance in the sector at all levels and by both calling out and changing practices that disadvantage or hinder women.

4. Misogyny can be perpetuated against women on an individual basis in a range of ways. In every part of society this will manifest in different ways and for the purposes of this submission it is important to identify how it can occur within music in three ways: individual incidents of personalised misogyny, structures within the sector that perpetuate generalised misogyny (or prevent it from being dealt with effectively) and the role that negative or reductive music industry representations of women can play in perpetuating (as well as challenge) misogynistic beliefs in society. It is incumbent upon the sector to work to reduce all incidences and acceptances of misogyny within the sector and to break down the structures and cultures that can allow it to happen. Every part and person of the music industry has a role to play in achieving this and all UK Music members are committed to this work. We ask the committee to consider any submissions also made by our members, listed in the annex, alongside this submission.

**Question 1: What correlation exists, if any, between misogynistic lyrics and violence against women and girls?**

5. Music is an artform which creators use to explore themselves and society. Artists should be allowed to inform us about lived experiences and articulate how they view the world around them. This may result in challenging content being produced by artists, songwriters and composers but without the presumption that they hold those beliefs themselves. Challenging content can cover a range of tropes beyond overtly misogynistic language. UK Music as an organisation condemns misogyny yet stands by the right of creators to the right of consensual freedom of expression, as defined by Article 10 of the Human Rights Act.

6. As far as we are aware there is no evidenced causal link between misogynistic lyrics and violence against women and girls. Some research suggests a link between misogynistic lyrics and misogynistic beliefs, other research suggests the causality is reversed, that misogynists are attracted to misogynistic lyrics, others again suggest that misogyny in music is the reflection of misogyny in broader society.³

7. It is important to balance creative freedom with the need for consumers to be informed if a product contains material that they may find offensive or unsuitable. Parental Advisory is a warning label which was first introduced by the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA) in 1985 with the intention

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/1745691620927666
of alerting parents of potentially unsuitable material for younger children. UK record labels adopted this in 1980s also on physical products and in 2011 the BPI formalised this usage with a code of conduct focusing on online content.  

Streaming music services such as Apple Music also carry “E” symbols to identify inappropriate lyrical content.

8. The public discourse around lyrics has, and will continue, to change – reflecting the cultural evolutions on a number of issues such as misogyny. There are lyrics from songs released 10 years ago, that now the public do not wish to hear and will not engage with. The general public are ultimately the best arbiters of what is and isn’t appropriate as they are the ones who consume the music.

9. Artists are also reflecting individually on their lyrics. Hayley Williams, lead singer of the rock band US Paramore had great success with the song Misery Business in which the narrator disparages a love rival as “once a whore, you’re nothing more...”. The band retired the song from their live shows in 2018 with Williams citing the song’s “anti-feminist” message as a key reason for the change. As tastes and social mores change, so will the content of the music we listen to, which is something Williams noted when asking for Misery Business to be pulled from a Women of Rock Spotify playlist.  

10. A further key point to emphasize is that, in the experience of UK Music misogyny is genre and content agnostic. Misogynistic tropes can exist in lyrics across the sector and are present in forms far beyond music. A provocative letter in 2019 signed by 190 Australian artists accused classical opera of having a “default setting” that was “synonymous with violence against women”. UK Music would discourage the Committee from narrowly focusing on any particular genre or form of music. If misogynistic lyrics are used to actively incite physical or mental harm against specific or groups of individuals this should not be tolerated. Content of this ilk may be confined to online forums and fringe political groups and will not be promoted by the mainstream music industry. There is in this respect a greater need for social media companies and platforms to take responsibility for hate speech, and such like, and it is clear the proposed Online Harms Bill has a role in ensuring the legislative framework is right. It is vital that the Committee remains vigilant to this issue as part of its inquiry.

11. While inappropriate content should be classified with content warnings and limits, UK Music feels there are sufficient self-regulatory practices in place. Industry will continue to work with artists to address misogynistic views, as well as structures in the sector and society at large.

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4 https://www.bpi.co.uk/media/1047/parental-advisory-guidelines.pdf

7 For more depth see Kirsten Dyck, Reichsrock: The International Web of White-Power and Neo-Nazi Hate Music, Rutgers University Press
Question 2: What types of support exists for women experiencing sexism or misogyny in the music industry? How can they report problems or abuse?

12. With over 70% of the music industry workforce classified as freelancers, and a high concentration of small and micro businesses operating within it, the structure of the sector can make it very difficult to apply standards which all people operating within it can be held to account over. This is not to say that there aren’t exceptional Human Resources departments and robust procedures within companies available to employees but the high concentration of female freelancers means these women working in the music industry lack access, knowledge and sometimes confidence of where to take complaints further as a matter of course. A survey by the Musicians’ Union (MU) found 61% of their members believed freelancers to be at greater risk of being sexually harassed.

13. In recognition of the importance of everyone – employee and freelancer – being given support the industry has put in place extensive resources and in the last year has been collaborating to develop more. This includes the MU Safe Spaces scheme which allows anyone working in the music industry to anonymously report incidents of sexual harassment. The service can signpost towards relevant support services, provide advice on people’s rights in their specific situation and options going forward if the complainant wants to take action on a specific allegation.

14. Help Musicians, an established music charity, run a helpline staffed by highly trained call operators open to anyone working in the music industry who is looking for help with bullying and harassment, including sexual harassment. This helpline provides support, a confidential space to talk about what is happening and guidance on next steps.

15. Many bodies also have codes of practices, for example the Association of Independent Festivals (AIF) code for safe festivals. The MU and ISM have also developed a code of practice which UK Music and many member organisations support, which commits them to a “proactive approach” to improving work place culture, opposition to bullying, harassment and discrimination and a zero tolerance approach in their own organisations, access to a clear and straightforward reporting process and embedding these principles “at an early stage” of every musicians career. The MU also provides guidance on developing a sexual harassment code of practice to provide a simple and effective template for organisations looking to implement change. Trade bodies such as the MMF and MPG also have codes of conduct that sets standards that its members are required to adhere to, and record labels have

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8 https://www.researchgate.net/publication/360901368_Bullying_and_Harassment_in_the_Music_Industry_Completely_entangled_in_its_fabric
9 https://musiciansunion.org.uk/safespace
10 https://musiciansunion.org.uk/safespace
11 https://www.helpmusicians.org.uk/get-advice/bullying-and-harassment-helpline#
extensive in-house resources and programmes for both employees and their artists, which are often on a global scale.

16. Over the past year UK Music, alongside other sector bodies in the music industry, has also been working with other creative sectors to align approaches and collaborate in terms of how the creative industries as a whole can improve the way they prevent and tackle harassment, bullying and discrimination. Led by Creative UK and involving the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport and representatives from music, film, fashion, advertising and theatre, a working group has been established to take forward this work with aim to “prevent, protect and monitor”. It is important to note that discrimination may manifest in structural terms, such as pay equality, as well as in reports of personal harms. All indicators must be made visible and tackled as symptomatic of the change we seek.

17. BPI has been leading work, in collaboration with others across the UK Music membership, to provide a more consistent framework across all of music to complement existing available resources and ensure everyone is adhering to the same principles by bringing together materials into one place and requiring transparency on measurable indicators. This would be a public facing resource that includes information on what bullying, harassment and discrimination is, what to do in the event it occurs, measurements of what good practice looks like, training and signposting. By designing a visible and useful tool this will be aimed at anyone in music, whether they are freelance or employees.

18. Music industry organisations are also engaging with plans for an Independent Standards Authority (ISA). Devised by TIME’S UP UK, this would support the reporting and investigation of misconduct complaints, with the benefit of improving accountability across the creative industries. An initial phase to establish the ISA is underway involving film and TV with music expected to be invited next to take part in its development process. UK Music welcomes the principle and intent behind the ISA, which would complement existing resources and hopefully provide much needed support to freelancers, as well as survivors of historic cases.

19. A report on bullying and harassment in the music industry found that in reported instances of bullying, 55% of perpetrators had control over the victim’s career, in 65% of cases the perpetrator was a man or a group of men indicating power imbalances are a dynamic that needs to be considered within music. This further strengthens the case for greater empowerment of women across the music industry.

20. Cactus City case study:

There are also a number of organisations working hard to reduce sexism and misogyny in the music industry. The first of its kind in the UK, Cactus City studio is a London based feminist recording studio like no other, designed to be a safe space for women and gender minorities to write, record, produce and express themselves. Initially created in 2018 as a pop-up studio, they now exist as an organisation leading to the forefront of creating a safer music industry, through the Cactus City charter of good practice.

This charter aims to create a safer and more equal environment for people in the music industry. The charter is made up of simple pledges which studios, and their users, can use to make a difference to the lives of women in the music industry. Signing up to the charter shows commitment to bringing change in the industry for women and gender minorities without placing the onus on them. The pledges range from greeting everyone in the room, avoiding inappropriate language and derogatory comments, to creating a list of trusted public transport companies that people can use to get home from late night sessions. Cactus City is a great example of a female-led organisation making change for the music industry, and the charter is a practical way for other studios to follow their excellent lead.

Question 3: How safe do women and girls feel at live music concerts and festivals?

21. Although UK Music does not directly represent promoters, venues and festivals we work closely with all parts of the live music industry on a number of issues. The expression of misogyny through violence and harassment against women and girls is high in the UK, with only 3% of women aged 18- to 24-year-olds believing they had not been sexually harassed in a public space. Safe Spaces Now, found that 40% of women under 40 reported they had been sexually harassed at a music concert with 60% of music workers having experienced sexual harassment at work. Though not entirely men, this is mostly an expression of misogyny with most incidents being perpetuated by men towards women. The sector is taking action to make sure women and girls feel safe in music spaces.

22. AIF relaunched Safer Spaces at Festivals in May 2022, with over 100 festivals signed up. The Charter states that “sexual harassment, assault and violence will be taken seriously, acted upon promptly and investigated. This is supplemented by a commitment to clear, robust reporting and disclosure procedures, including how to report incidents onsite and post event” as well as a commitment to promoting advice on how to be an “active bystander” and safely intervene in instances of sexual harassment. High profile signatories include Leeds Festival, Creamfields and TRNSMT. June 2022 saw the launch of:  

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17. https://www.thebritishacademy.ac.uk/blog/researching-sexual-violence-uk-music-festivals/
of the Safer Dance initiative an online self-assessment tool to help venues improve their response to sexual harassment incidents. Large festivals such as Glastonbury have harassment policies in place highlighting the action staff and security can take in the event of inappropriate behaviour.

23. Many women do attend and have very positive experiences of live music. An AIF audience survey in 2019 asked ‘Did you experience sexual assault or harassment at any festival this year?’ 98.7% answered ‘No’, this was of a sample size of 2,283 respondents, 68.8% of whom were women.

24. It is also important to consider that live music venues are also workplaces. A survey by the MU found that 48% of musicians had experienced sexual harassment at work. There are also various recent, fairly high-profile examples of allegations of sexual harassment and assaults in industry settings outside of live music such as in the filming of the Blurred Lines music video.

25. Intersectional issues must not be forgotten either. To this end Deaf and disabled music industry charity Attitude is Everything are currently supporting the NTIA’s Women’s Safety Taskforce and have produced a series of films with A Good Night Out about disabled women’s safety at venues.

Question 4: What expectations are there on women working in the music industry compared to men?

26. Experiences are often anecdotal therefore it is better to look at how the structural factors in the industry can shape women in the sector, and what the existing and historic data shows. It is also important to note how some women can face different intersections of discrimination, based on race, disability, class, gender identity or sexuality. We highly advise the Committee to consider this as part of their inquiry.

27. As the UK Music biennial Diversity Taskforce survey found in 2020, women are underrepresented in senior positions within the sector. Although there is almost gender parity in the total sector workforce (49.6% women in 2020 – up from 45.3% in 2016), this is heavily skewed towards entry level positions. Interns in the sector are 66.7% women, whereas women representative 40.4% of the

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21 https://www.glastonburyfestivals.co.uk/information/advice/harassment-policy/
sector at senior level\textsuperscript{25}. While this does suggest the sector is moving in the right direction, there may be issues with entry level roles rightly being targeted at diversifying the workforce yet less focus on what needs to be done to retain those from diverse backgrounds and enable them to progress beyond that. Music is not necessarily unique as a sector in having this challenge however.

28. Another potential reason for the lack of women in senior positions can be found by looking at the age profile of women in the sector. Since 2018 the number of women aged 45 – 64 in the sector has fallen from 38.7\% of respondents aged 45 – 64 to 35\% of respondents.\textsuperscript{26} This compares to 66.3\% of 16 – 24 year olds. Women outnumber men in the younger age groups but effectively “age out” of the sector, with the tipping point being the 35 – 44 year old age bracket where they narrowly outnumber men before dramatically falling away in the 45 – 64 and 65+ age bracket.\textsuperscript{27} A number of factors may account for this, including perpetuated cultural habits of recruitment and promotion, cultures of gendered expectations, opacity around pay and promotion. There are still worrying gender pay gaps in the music industry and workplaces everywhere and we need swifter and greater progress for this gap to come down as more women take on senior and leadership positions within their organisations.

29. A further factor to consider is the way the law around maternity leave for freelancers works making it harder to maintain a career and return to work after having children. In the UK, PAYE employees are allowed to take maternity and paternity leave (though heavily weighted towards maternity leave), and it may be taken non-consecutively\textsuperscript{28}. However, for freelancers only one parent may claim Maternity Allowance and this can only be taken in one block\textsuperscript{29}. The current system of Maternity Allowance for the self-employed places the entire burden of childcare onto the mother and offers no financial support for self-employed fathers or same-sex partners wanting to share some or all of the childcare. This inflexible system perpetuates gender-stereotypes and is holding back equality in the music industry given the high proportion of freelancers working within it.

30. In a less formalised employment space it is also harder to enforce the statutory right to non-discrimination for pregnant women. Therefore, the interaction between societal parenting norms and the contractual structure of much of the sector means women are forced into taking on the primary caregiver role alone. This can then impact on their career prospects, unfairly leading to slower promotions, less pay progression and potentially the ultimate choice to leave the sector.

\textsuperscript{25} \url{https://www.ukmusic.org/equality-diversity/uk-music-diversity-report-2020/} \quad \text{Senior is defined as “Senior Management and Senior Executive”}
\textsuperscript{26} \url{https://www.ukmusic.org/equality-diversity/uk-music-diversity-report-2020/}
\textsuperscript{27} \url{https://www.ukmusic.org/equality-diversity/uk-music-diversity-report-2020/}
\textsuperscript{28} \url{https://www.gov.uk/employers-maternity-pay-leave#:~:text=Statutory%20Maternity%20Leave%2C%20the%20baby%20is%20born%20early.}
\url{https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance}
\textsuperscript{29} \url{https://www.gov.uk/maternity-allowance}
31. The sector is already pushing for changes in this area. UK Music has long supported the #SelfieLeave campaign asking for the self-employed to be entitled to both shared parental leave and pay\(^{30}\). There are also other specific organisations working in this space such as the organisation Parents & Carers in Performing Arts (PiPA), who work across the creative arts to establish and spread best practice and combat the lack of provision for parents in the performing arts\(^{31}\).

32. It should also be noted that some roles within the music industry have a high historic occupational gender segregation but there are signs this could be changing too. For example, music production has very few women working in it yet membership of the Music Producers Guild has gone from 5% in 2016 to 15% today.

**Q5: What steps should the Government and other industry bodies take to tackle misogynistic and sexist attitudes towards women in music?**

33. There is an opportunity for ongoing dialogue from Government with the work already taking place in the sector, given diversity and harassment are such well-defined workstreams for UK Music and its members.

34. The sector is working to implement the recommendations of the UK Music Diversity Taskforce’s 10 Point Plan, which all UK Music members have signed up to. Some key commitments include:

- UK Music members to commit and spend an allocated amount of their annual recruitment budget to ensure a diverse candidate pool and for a 12-month diversity continuing professional development (CPD) / training programme to ensure fair career opportunities for all, as well as commit budget to implement a programme to increase diversity in middle management.

- UK Music members to help UK Music implement wider, better and more practiced transparency reporting around gender and ethnic pay gaps – including moving towards reporting by all organisations of 50+ employees.

- Each UK Music member to identify a socially engaged organisation whose work relates to gender or race whom they can invest in on a long term basis with material and measurable engagement.

- Each UK Music member to develop diversity policies and internally set diversity targets for core staff. Targets to be published and reported to UK Music and updated annually in order to assess progress. Member bodies to promote diversity and inclusion to partners and stakeholders ensuring industry standards are met.


\(^{31}\) [https://pipacampaign.org/who-we-are/our-story]
Each UK Music member to work towards increasing diversity on its executive bodies and boards – 30% diverse (race) and 50% (gender). Progress towards these goals is to be reported to UK Music as part of annual progress audit.\footnote{https://www.ukmusic.org/equality-diversity/ten-point-plan/#:~:text=The%20Ten%20Point%20Plan%20aligns,of%20the%20UK%20music%20industry.}

35. This represents a roadmap for improving the music sector across a range of different sections of society, including for women. In the long run this kind of structural change will reduce incidents of misogyny, racism, ableism and homophobia by ensuring a diverse range of people become key decision makers and are recognised as a core part of the industry.

36. The Government should also take forward the outcome of its consultation on sexual harassment in the workplace. Launched at the end of former Prime Minister Theresa May’s period in office and announced in July 2021, the Government set out plans to bring forward a duty for employers to prevent sexual harassment amongst other positive measures\footnote{https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/consultation-on-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace/outcome/consultation-on-sexual-harassment-in-the-workplace-government-response}. The review concluded the Government would look closely at extending the time limit for bringing Equality Act 2010 based cases to the employment tribunal from 3 months to 6 months. This is something the music sector would support for all freelancers, given many survivors don’t take an immediate decision to report as sometimes it takes longer to reach a decision or realise that a claim exists, unlike cases of unfair dismissal for example.

37. Other legislative changes we would recommend include extending the protections relating to discrimination and harassment in the Equality Act 2010 to all freelancers so that they are entitled to the same protections as the wide range of individuals in the workplace who are already protected; reinstate section 40 of the Equality Act 2010 without the three strikes rule to protect all workers from third party harassment (this will also assist in dealing with cases involving freelancers and/or audience members) and reviewing the limit of two characteristics within Section 14 of the Equality Act 2010, so the law acknowledges that overlapping and interdependent systems of discrimination impacts on people who experience sexual harassment.

Conclusion

38. Misogyny exists in society, as it does in music and in every walk of life. We have already been doing a lot across the sector to understand and respond to this, and are continuing to do so. There is an opportunity for the UK Government and devolved governments to support the work the industry is already doing to address unique or ubiquitous structural causes of inequalities in the sector. This includes educating the industry (and predominantly men) about misogyny, misogynistic tropes. It also includes instilling common respect, to increase awareness, as well as to empower employees and creatives identifying as women, to assert their rights and to provide support available when they feel they have been victimised or harassed because of their gender.
39. UK Music’s Chief Executive Jamie Njoku-Goodwin has reiterated our commitment to carrying this work forward; “It is vital that we unite as an industry to drive out discrimination and harassment and make the UK music business a truly welcoming and inclusive place to work for everyone”34.

40. Steps are being taken to make the music sector a better place to be and more gender respectful and inclusive of all who want to be part of it, whether as a gig-goer, a mega-star, an executive or a sound mixer, but there is still a long way to go. Women across the music industry are creating amazing music, doing incredible work, and making valuable contributions to the sector. This inspires us to do better and to work harder to ensure that all are welcome, respected, valued, supported and that their experience in music is a positive and fulfilling one.

Annex

UK Music’s membership comprises:

- AIM – The Association of Independent Music – the trade body for the independent music community, representing 1000+ independent record labels and associated businesses, from globally recognised brands to the next generation of British music entrepreneurs.

- BPI - The British Phonographic Industry - The representative voice of the UK’s recorded music sector. Their membership consists of approximately 500 music companies, ranging from hundreds of SME independent labels to the major global record companies Universal, Sony and Warner. They also organise the BRIT Awards, the Mercury Prize and administer the Music Exports Growth Scheme (MEGS).

- FAC – The Featured Artists Coalition - UK trade body representing the specific rights and interests of music artists. A not-for-profit organisation, they represent a diverse, global membership of creators at all stages of their careers and provide a strong, collective voice for artists.

- The Ivors Academy - An independent association representing professional songwriters and composers. As champions of music creators for over 70 years, the organisation works to support, protect and celebrate music creators including its internationally respected Ivors Awards.

- MMF - Music Managers Forum - representing over 1000 UK managers of artists, songwriters and producers across the music industry with global businesses.

- MPG - Music Producers Guild - representing and promoting the interests of all those involved in the production of recorded music – including music studios, producers, engineers, mixers, remixers, programmers and mastering engineers.

• MPA - Music Publishers Association - with 260 major and independent music publishers in membership, representing close to 4,000 catalogues across all genres of music.

• Musicians' Union - Representing over 32,000 musicians from all genres, both featured and non-featured.

• PPL is the music licensing company which works on behalf of over 110,000 record companies and performers to license recorded music played in public (at pubs, nightclubs, restaurants, shops, offices and many other business types) and broadcast (TV and radio) in the UK. PPL also collects royalties for members when their recorded music is played around the world through a network of international agreements with other collective management organisations (CMOs).

• PRS for Music is responsible for the collective licensing of rights in the musical works of 150,000 composers, songwriters and publishers and an international repertoire of 28 million songs.

• UK Music also has an informal association with LIVE (Live music Industry Venues & Entertainment), the voice of the UK’s live music and entertainment business. LIVE members are a federation of 13 live music industry associations representing 3,150 businesses, over 4,000 artists and 2,000 backstage workers.