

Written evidence submitted by Laura Snapes (MiM0013)

I don't believe there is any materially effective support that exists for women and non-binary people – whether musicians or behind-the-scenes figures – experiencing sexism or misogyny within the music industry. Major record labels might have HR departments or – in the wake of #MeToo – have established specific task forces to deal with these issues, but it strikes me that they are little short of a back-covering sham. And while there are many mutual support groups where women can share their experiences, they cannot challenge the existing power structures.

I know first-hand from interviewing many high-profile female pop stars that they remain subject to demeaning behaviour. This runs to varying degrees of severity: having their creative vision limited, particularly compared to their male peers (see: the recent case of Raye not being allowed to release her debut album, despite racking up massive hits for Polydor, and ultimately being set free from her contract); being sexualised against their will; being forced to use social media despite online abuse severely damaging their mental health (see: my recent interview with Mabel); being overworked by teams with no regard for their wellbeing despite being in obvious physical distress (see: my recent interview with Sky Ferreira). In her memoir, Lily Allen spoke of being raped by an executive at her former record label, and that man remaining in his position to this day; meanwhile, she was sidelined for being difficult.

There are widely known allegations of sexual impropriety against many high-profile male record label executives, and yet they, too, remain in post. It is not in the interests of HR departments to allow employee allegations to start ousting executives, lest the whole rotten system collapse. When I worked at an internationally known British music publication and experienced extensive, life-ruining bullying, I felt I had no choice but to leave, having been warned by HR that starting a grievance process would be long and taxing. I didn't have the energy left for it.

Short of becoming a whistleblower – and opening oneself up to potential legal threats – I see no genuine recourse for any woman who experiences sexism and misogyny in the music industry as it

stands.

In order to tackle misogynistic and sexist attitudes towards women in music, there must be consequences for institutions – not just musical institutions – who are appraised of alleged wrongdoing and fail to investigate and take appropriate action. As X Factor star Rebecca Ferguson has suggested, there must be a music industry regulator or ombudsman responsible for artist welfare: the British music industry loves to eulogise Amy Winehouse, but I've witnessed first-hand that it hasn't learned a thing from what it did to her. And as ever, these issues stem back to childhood, and how boys steadily become aware that they can get away with demeaning girls, whether via the behaviour they see at home, in the media or at school: tackling misogyny and stamping out sexist attitudes needs to be a part of the national curriculum from a young age. We need the next generation to grow up with a staunch awareness that these are not permissible behaviours if we are ever to break the boys' club mentality that still runs the British music industry.

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