

How Female DJs and Producers Narrowed the Gender Gap in Electronic Dance Music: Strategies and Campaign that have been Successful in the Last Decade

Ziyi Tang

The Governor's Academy, Byfield, Massachusetts, MA 01922, USA

Abstract. A voice is missing from the electronic dance music (EDM) industry: whether in prominent festival line-ups like Tomorrowland and the Ultra Music Festival, or press that features achievements of top music stars, women are underrepresented. Indeed, the EDM industry has long been male-dominated and permeated with gender imbalance. Only until the last decade did the gender gap begin to close: since 2012, investigations examining gender ratio and female artist participation at music festivals have reported an ascending trend of female producers/DJs. Through analyses of past interviews with women musicians and other sources of documentation that shed light on their experiences, this research investigates the possible factors that contributed to the gender imbalance in the EDM industry, as well as the strategies that female producers/DJs developed to work against the gender disadvantages. Hopefully, through exploring the ways that women worked to overcome gender barriers, this research casts light on real solutions that address gender discrimination and sexism in the EDM industry, and thereby help to make other industries that have pronounced gender gap more diverse.

Keywords: EDM; Female DJs; Gender Imbalance in Industry; Overcoming Gender Disadvantage in the Workplace.

1. Introduction

Electronic Dance Music (EDM) has been around since the 1970s, or earlier if one counts some experimental artists, but it only started to become one of the most popular types of music within the last twenty years. Ever since the genre has been prominent enough to be reported by media outlets, it has been clear that there have been major gender disparities among producers and DJs. Yet, surprisingly, improvements have begun to appear in the data within the last several years: the gender gap has become more narrowed and female participation has been steadily rising. According to *female:pressure*, a database that publishes an annual report on the prevalence of women in EDM, only 9.2% of EDM festival artists were female in 2012, but the ratio soared to 26.9% in 2020-2021, the last two years complete data was available.

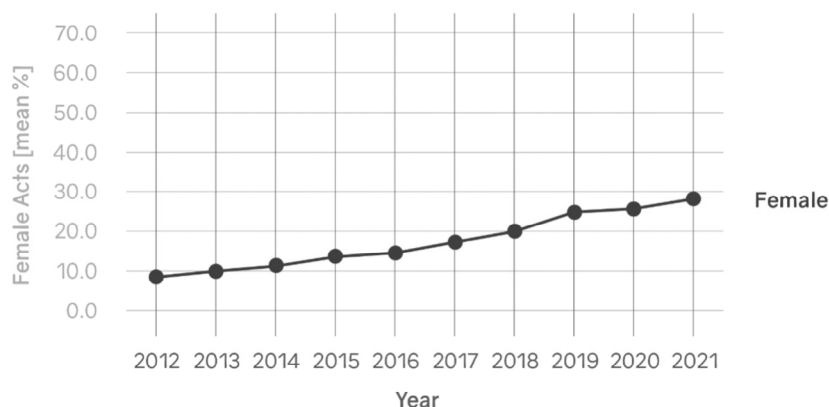


Figure 1. Percentage of women on line-ups
Source: female:pressure

Likewise, *DJ Mag*, a British industry magazine that selects 100 top DJs every year since 1993, included only one female act in 2012 but thirteen women in 2020 among the top 100. Though the gender distribution is hardly balanced, these data are sufficient to demonstrate an increase in women's participation in EDM.

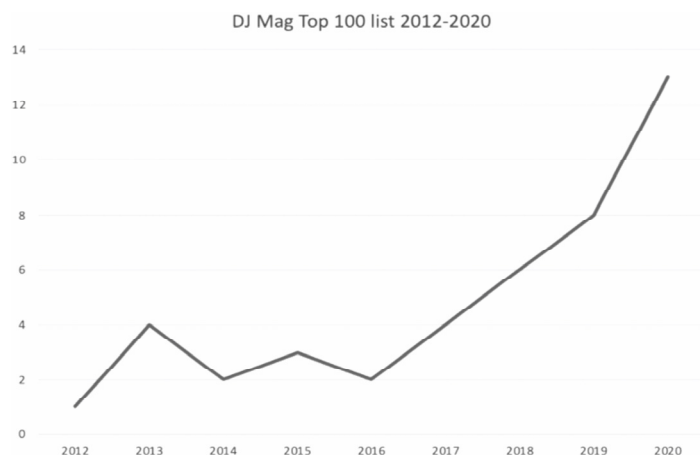


Figure 2. Number of female acts in Top 100 DJs
Source: [female:pressure](#), [Pitchfork](#), [DJ Mag Top 100](#)

Meanwhile, anecdotally, incidents of gender discrimination also seem to be falling; they were no longer as frequently reported as several years ago, when they were often brought up in interviews of female DJs. In fact, in recent years, some new female DJs have found the atmosphere within the EDM sphere to be particularly welcoming and have claimed that they have never encountered any gender issues. “I don’t find it male dominated in my circle...It doesn’t bother me at all,” commented DJ Light Ginger in 2018.

What explains this phenomenon? To begin with, this research examines the causes of the gender disparity before recent years through exploring existing interviews with women producers/DJs ranging from beginners to professionals. Artists’ experiences have reflected that the lack of female participation in the EDM industry is not a result of genetics, but societal factors such as double standards and harassment, plus a gender imbalance on the business side of the industry among record labels, promoters, festival lineup creators, and other non-artistic roles. Strategies that female producers have developed to overcome discrimination, such as the formation of all-female collectives, training programs, supportive networks, female-owned record labels, and media/visibility initiatives including quotas, have been closely linked to the increasing numbers of female DJs and producers in the past five years. These strategies were thought to succeed because they directly addressed the problems that had prevented female DJs/producers from rising up in the industry.

2. Factors that have Contributed to the Gender Imbalance in the EDM Industry

When asked, “What contributes to the unbalanced gender ratio in the electronic music industry?” many tend to answer with biological conclusions, assuming that a person’s competence and interests are reflected in their gender. “Guys get way more into this stuff than girls,” suggested Above and Beyond, a well-known English electronic music group that once ranked No. 6 in DJ Mag 100. What was implied in their speech is that there are fewer women producers simply because women are less interested in electronic music. Indeed, if women are not the target audience for electronic music, why would there be as many female producers? A study done by Live Innovation belied this assertion. When music preferences of 169 female and 132 male respondents were reported and compared,

electronic music was shown to be preferred amongst 11.8% females and 23.5% males. It is noteworthy that, even though there is a difference in the data, it's only a ratio of 2:1. Yet the proportion of male to female DJs and producers working in the industry, or at least appearing at festivals, was 9:1. A 2:1 difference in preferences among the audience should lead to a 2:1 difference among the creators, not the 9:1 participation that we see now, unless other factors are at play that prevent women audience from becoming artists.

The second implication in Above and Beyond's response is the idea that the field is too demanding and dull for women, requiring high levels of creativity and some knowledge of engineering. Although many won't admit it, the underlying assumption is that women are less creative than men, or otherwise having an unknown biological deficiency that makes them incapable of producing the same amount of artists as their opposite gender. However, if women indeed exhibit lower levels of creativity, it derives not so much from genetic reasons as societal and cultural influences. As Piirto discovered in 1991, "Women do not exhibit lower levels of creative achievement until after college." This perfectly demonstrates that creativity isn't determined by nature but by the way individuals are nurtured. Creativity could be permanently corroded by societal expectations and one's perception of their goals, changed as the way their local community views them. Sadly, people who want to fit in socially behave the way that others behave and expected them to, and many desert their ambitions, which are considered salient, intuitively along the way. Mar'i and Karayanni (1983)'s research further demonstrates this point: when evaluating gender differences in creativity within the Middle East, they found that gender-based creativity differences were "modulated by the level of modernization in the country whereby an increase in gender equality was accompanied by an increase in creativity among women." Again, creativity could not be biologically determined if the number of creative achievements rises with the level of modernization.

Above all, if women indeed have much less interest in electronic music or were less creative than men as proposed in the previous hypotheses, there wouldn't have been an increase in female representation in the last few years. Biological factors could be the answer if nothing had improved, but gender proportions did change in the past few years under various efforts made by women. This indicates that the lack of female DJs and producers is, in fact, influenced by societal and cultural factors rather than biological factors.

2.1 Harassment, Gender Expectations, and Double Standards

The premiere factor behind the gender imbalance in the music industry consists of expectations, double standards, and harassment specifically directed towards women. As various interviews with female producers and DJs have shown, producing and DJing was commonly viewed as loud and outgoing work that doesn't suit women. HAAi, an Australian-born London-based DJ, said she perceived DJing as a male-job in her teens, and has since then been involved in numerous situations where people thought she was a DJ's girlfriend rather than the DJ, even though she was playing behind the booth. Similarly, DJ Cosmo was asked by callers to tell the "DJ" that "he is doing a good job," even though she was doing the DJing herself on a radio program. The reasons behind these incidents were common: people naturally associate certain professions with a gender, and biasedly think that producing and DJing wasn't cut out for women. The lack of role model in this industry also frustrates women who are learning to become producers or DJs, making them suspicious of their own talents. In 2018, a nine-year-old girl who was learning to DJ with psytrance artist Khromata suddenly announced that she wanted to quit. The reason was that she didn't see any girl DJs around her, and this was a proof that "boys just must be better." Besides this student, it's hard to tell how many other women's self-confidence has been diminished because of the environment, their career forever thwarted by the intimidating atmosphere.

Moreover, those who were trapped by expectations might never have a chance to express their voice and real identities. For example, producer and DJ Kelli Hand took a gender-neutral pseudonym, 'K-HAND,' and hid her real identity in to avoid gender issues in the 1990s; Charlotte de Witte, a Belgian DJ and producer, initially played under the pseudonym of a male ego "Raving George," so

that she could avoid gender stereotypes as a female DJ. Adopting gender neutral or male monikers was quite common among female DJs until recently. This is evidence that expectations had prevented women from showing their truest selves, making them believe that they did not have a place in the EDM world.

Double standards based on gender are another hurtful minefield in this career. Hannah Wants was once accused of plagiarizing on one of her tracks, even though there was no evidence of such. Online abuse and verbal attack deluged and wants called it one of the hardest moments of her career. "People were saying 'kill yourself'. It was just horrific." She then recalled that "incidents of plagiarism by men at the same moment received minimal attention." While Hannah Wants was a victim of sexism, male DJ Justin James was one of those who cast blatant stereotypes towards women: In a post on Facebook where he looked for female DJs for shows, he attached to it a list of requirements that needed the female artists to have specific height of "5'2-5'7" and weight of "47-54kg", declaring that "I only work with attractive female DJs that know how to read a room and play."

It's also no mystery that women are subjected to harassment and verbal abuse in the industry. An eminent Canadian musician and one of the EDM's most influential female pioneers, Grimes, shared that multiple male producers have assaulted her sexually by claiming they won't finish a track unless she goes back to their hotel room. In 2016, when the number of women in EDM was still pretty low, she said, "I don't think there are few female producers because women aren't interested... It's a pretty hostile environment." In "Underplayed," a documentary film directed by Stacy Lee that features some of the world's most prominent female DJs and producers, including Rezz, Tygapaw, Alison Wonderland, Tokimonsta, Nightwing, Sherrille, and Nervo, many female artists reported feeling unwelcomed in the music scene. From dealing with Twitter comments that suggested they exploit their sex to attract audiences, to receiving 29% less money than their male counterparts, these artists exhausted themselves combating widespread sexism. It is appalling to see how self-doubt still permeates in even the most successful and popular group of artists. Other forms of gender discrimination come through blatant contempt and neglect. An article published by Molly Hankins, who was working on the business side of the industry, recorded such a story: "As a 23-year-old, so excited to be working her first real job in EDM game, I found myself crying in the bathroom at their show after being literally pushed out of the way by this guy (an Israeli booking agent) while trying to get some CD's signed for a giveaway the band was supposed to be doing. When I was speaking to him he looked right through me. It was a total shock." It has been demonstrated in multiple research articles that harassment can deeply influence women's career attainment and increase stress while lowering satisfaction and commitment (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2017). To quote one meta-analysis, "[sexual harassment] experiences are associated with negative outcomes such as decreased job satisfaction...withdrawing from work, ill physical and mental health, and even symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder" (Willness, Steel, and Lee 2007). Many who have been sexually harassed will "leave their jobs to escape the harassing environment" (McLaughlin, Uggen, and Blackstone 2017). Therefore, the presence of gender discrimination and harassment in EDM, proven by one and another story of these female artists, blocks female participants from truly engaging in this career and has made it difficult to foster an inclusive and welcoming atmosphere.

2.2 Male Dominance in Music Media, Record Labels, and Other Key Roles in the EDM Industry

The second cause behind this 9:1 disparity could be associated with male dominance in electronic music media, business, and industry. Lack of media coverage and documentation of female producers had prevented them from exposure, in turn leading to a lack of role models and causing fewer women to participate in this career. Liz Torres and Screamin Rachael (who was a founder of one of the original Chicago house music labels, Trax records) were early examples of female producers who received little to no media attention despite their contributions. Until now, from founders of record labels to other key roles in the industry, such as curators, journalists, club owners, and booking agents, men have remained the gatekeepers and the ones who make the final decisions. Amongst those male

promoters many are shown to be favoring DJs from the same gender, or, like Justin James, discriminating based on appearance, leaving female DJs/producers unnoticed in the corner. This leads to a lack of fair representation and diversity in the music media: oftentimes the hard work put in by talented female producers never comes to fruition because they are seldom booked or promoted; they only get a chance when the club manager kindly initiates an all-female night, and their chance to show up depends on the choice of their booking agents—that is, from the artists' perspective, based on pure luck.

Lastly, female expressions are often controlled in male-led record companies as the labels portray them in a different way from how they want to be portrayed. "That happens with men and women, but definitely more so with women," said Victoria Hesketh. "This includes what the artist should wear, and what dress size they should be."

3. Strategies that Female Producers/DJs Adopt to Narrow the Gender Disparity and Make the Industry More Diverse

By reflecting on interviews, surveys, and news articles about female producers/DJs, four categories of successful strategies can be classified: female-only collectives, record labels, media representation, and quotas. The emergence of these supporting programs and networks and the increase of women participation in EDM in recent years shows that gender issues such as harassment and double standards have hindered women from fully participating. The fact that collectives, which can be safe spaces for women to develop in a harassment-free environment, have contributed to greater participation shows that harassment was in fact a factor holding women back. In the same way, the success of female-run business and media organizations in improving the ratio shows that representation in those fields is also an important factor.

3.1 Collectives

To work against sexual harassment and gender discrimination, starting around 2014-2015 many female DJs founded collectives that train females producers and DJs in a supportive and safe environment. These programs, though scarce prior to those years, have now covered a wide range of locations and music genres. Some female collectives include London-based SIREN (founded 2016); French-based 'TGAF' ('These Gyals Are On Fiyah, 2015-2018); South East London collective 'BORN n BREAD' (2015-present); New York-based 'Discwoman' (2014-present) and many more. Amongst them Discwoman was established the earliest (2014). Founded by Frankie Decaiza Hutchinson, Christine McCharen-Tran, and Emma Burgess-Olson (Umfang), it aimed to have the women properly represented in EDM. The initiators met each other through performances: Hutchison encountered McCharen-Tran in her own collective, and later got acquainted with Umfang because she enjoyed very much a track Umfang played. Collectives like Discwoman can get their members exposure that they wouldn't get otherwise, in Umfang's words "...to book women who aren't getting a lot of attention and are underrepresented...those who are really stoked to get that opportunity in a really respected venue." Now the collective has gained a high reputation and performs throughout the world from New York to Tokyo; it has negotiated rates that currently go up to about \$2,000 an hour, according to Decaiza Hutchinson. In a similar way, the Black Madonna's female-oriented DAPHNE party series at Smart Bar in Chicago and the Yorkshire Sound Women Network's Berlin's Salt + Sass help expose as many female artists as possible by booking them in their self-organized venues.

The establishment of one collective often inspires others. Discwomen's presence acted as a role model and fostered success of New York-based collective Working Women, a collection led by Tanya Lyon, Kristin Malossi, Nina BC and Ashlyn Behrnt, all of whom began learning mixing from scratch in 2016. They became influential in the New York City underground electronic music scene in the span of just two years. When they spoke of their success, the founders reiterated Discwomen's importance to them. "Discwoman has been a huge presence for us," addressed Nina BC, "We're indebted to them for paving the way for women in Brooklyn in particular." Similarly, KOSO, a

collective in Norway that has now grown into a record label, was founded in 2015 in inspiration of the collective *female: pressure*. In Norway in 2015, women represented less than 5% of all music producers and sound engineers; KOSO performed much to alter that and offered help to a handful of young female artists along the way. They assisted artists to collaborate live performances outside of Norway, for instance, and as their founder Norway Pieces of Juno excitedly explained when she think back to the experience: “I’d never played in a group where there’s only female musicians ...it’s been a dream for a very long time.” Thanks to these collectives, many female artists were able to build their skills in a judgment-free environment and avoid sexual assaults. Nina Sonik, a Mexican artist who once involved in Discwoman, said that “women like her had very little places to play this kind of music before Discwoman arrived” as an approbation of Discwoman’s impact; Demian Licht, in line with Sonik, firmly agreed upon the importance of female collectives on female representation, saying that she believed Discwomen and similar collectives are “an essential beginning toward birthing a transgressive and modern shift in the way the country views women in music.”

3.2 Record Labels

Apart from collectives, female-owned or female-managed record labels became another overarching force in helping female musicians to overcome gender issues in electronic music industry. Amongst these record labels were Never Normal Record, Etruscan Gold Record, and Dirty Bird Record; all were independent EDM labels run by females. Their missions were similar: helping emerging artists to persevere in their identities while offering them greater opportunities to be recognized. The aforementioned Dirty Bird Label was operated under Crenshaw, both a manager and a mother of two children. She noted the challenges she faced as a working mom—the constant juggling with all the work and personal projects. Fortunately she met a group of colleagues who were willing to share her burden: Abi Getto, the day-to-day manager; Esther Yoon--the clothing manager for Dirt Bird--and Laren Lipsay, the content and marketing manager. Together these four women pushed the label to success. Up until now, the record label has had 133 artists and released 2571 tracks; it has won No. 1 Label of the Decade from Mixmag and was recognized as one of Billboard’s Five Best Independent Dance Labels of 2017. “We have been focusing on expanding by creating original pieces, transitioning to cut and sew, and really viewing Dirtybird as a brand—not just a record label,” said Esther Yoon. Besides the success of Dirty Bird, women have also been attaining higher positions in major labels in the past few years: for instance, Latrice Burnette became the Executive Vice President at Island Records in 2018, while Andrea Ganis attained the position of Executive Vice President at Atlantic Records. Increasing female status and power in media would serve as potential energy for other women to be represented more frequently and equally.

3.3 Media

In response to the lack of fair representation and diversity in the music media, other women began taking on the imbalance in media coverage directly. One of the earliest efforts was *female:pressure*, a database found in 1998 that contains information and contacts of thousands of female artists, helping to reflect the reality and light a candle in the dark. The network collected some genuine profiles of 2600 female electronic musicians, wherein their location, profession, style, name, and email were recorded in details. These revelations play a tremendous role in exposing female artists and their works to the public. Now people not only began to realize that women musicians isn’t lack in number but in representation, but also felt needed to resolve the issue and get more women involved.

In the years since 2015, efforts have changed from creating alternative media into influencing existing website and magazines. Partly by virtue of the increasing power from collectives and record labels, Smirnoff—a brand of vodka—signed up as a major sponsor and adopted approaches to increase representation of women after they noticed the unbalanced ratio. In 2017, Smirnoff collaborated with THUMP and Broadly (two prominent websites that are part of VICE media), as well as The Black Madonna (the aforementioned founder of DAPHNE in Chicago) to release *Top 50*

Women Making Noise, which is a list of most prominent female producers in EDM scene. This project, like the network *female:pressure*, served as a database for fans and booking agents to discover female artists. The firm also partnered with music-streaming app Spotify to create a feature that provides users with a percentage breakdown of the number of male and female artists users have listened to, and if one's listening preferences were sheer male, an "equalized" playlist of their music taste is offered. Other projects in this "Equalizing" three-year campaign include a documentary film entitled *Equalizing Music*, which delineated the challenges women have faced in the music industry. THUMP and Broadly announced that they would collab with a non-profit organization to create a workshop event that help mentor and foster young women talent in music. Mixmag, one of the top magazines covering EDM, announced its decision in 2017 to make 50% of its cover stars female. Companies such as Pitchfork followed the lead of *female:pressure* and began to create their own datasets, which track gender balance in festival-lineups.

3.4 Quotas

Once mainstream music media started to pay attention to the gender gap in EDM and had data back it up, the next step was to approach organizations and get them to commit to changing. By 2018, Pitchfork attested that forty-five international festivals had pledged to combat gender inequality by achieving a 50/50 gender split on their lineups and conference panels by 2022. This pledge movement is mainly being driven by the UK's PRS Foundation's program *Keychange*, will also aims to increase transparency around artist fees, ridding unconscious bias from recruitment, and implementing equality criteria in publicly funded projects. In line with Pitchfork and Mixmag, Vice has been promoting 50:50 gender ratio in lineups and releasing data on their websites and news since 2016. "Even though things may be slowly improving," they concluded after the percentage of female artists performing in Mutek (a Montreal festival) rise from 9.6% to 28.9% in two years, "there's still more work to be done."

Through these combined efforts, the progress is conspicuous in the data: as previously reported, the proportion of female acts rose from 9.2% in 2012 to 24.6% in 2019. The ratio of female artists booked in three major Parisian Electronic Clubs from 2017 to mid-2019 rose from 9.7% to 13.0%. Four international music festivals, Iceland Airwaves, FYF, Pitchfork, and Panorama, reached 50:50 gender ratio in 2018, and 45 more pledged to reach 50:50 gender ratio by 2022. Interestingly, this piece of news was reported by both New York Times and BBC News, which is another sign that the media is paying more attention to this issue. More female musicians and artists were entering the EDM sphere than ever in this decade: Mija, Nicole Moudaber, TOKIMONSTA, Rezz and many more are all amongst the emerging female DJs/producers who pumped up the top festivals in the world. As remarked by Alison Wonderland, an Australian electronic dance music producer and DJ: "I think that there are more women in this list year by year. The gap is slowly getting bridged."

4. The #MeToo Movement and Responses from the EDM Industry

Over the past few years, the expansion of the #Me Too movement into the music industry has empowered women facing threats of sexual assaults and discrimination. Established in 2006 by American activist Tarana Burke, the #Me Too movement went viral in 2017 after sexual assault allegations against Harvey Weinstein, a high-profiled film producer. The movement then set off a chain reaction and swept over a range of fields including politics, theater, journalism, and the music industry. While sexual abuse survivors are often silenced by people in position of power, social media has allowed victims to openly discuss their experiences of sexual abuse and build up defense. Such was the mission of "#Me Too": to encourage "all those who have been hurt" to speak out against assailants, particularly leaders in an industry. In the wake of the movement, leading dubstep figures have been called out and accused of sexual misconducts, including Datsik, Bassnectar, Billy Kenny, Omar Afra, Space Jesus, STUCA, and Diplo. Most figures were brought down from their altars; their careers came to a halt despite various efforts to deny these allegations. The downfall of these EDM

celebrities testified that sexual violence can be made transparent through proper media coverage, and social movements like “Me Too” could be an effective remedy to sexual abuses that perpetuated the EDM scene and the greater music industry.

4.1 The Silence Breakers

The pattern that sexual assault cases went largely unreported repeated itself when allegations towards these prominent DJs/producers surfaced not at the time of the sexual violence, but a few years later, after the “Me Too” movement had broken the silence in October, 2017. Female victims had unanimously chosen not to call for accountability due to reasons frequently cited by survivors: “fear of revictimization, distortion of allegations, and generally not being believed,” according to statistics published by The Criminal Justice System. In this case, victims were pressured into remaining silent by the artists’ demand, or petrified by their own sense of shame. Allegations against Lorin Ashton (Bassnectar) testified that he provided multiple underage girls large sums for their silence. “He allegedly invited Ramsbottom to his hotel for sex and paid her \$1,000,” the lawsuit posited. “In April 2014, Bowling allegedly met Ashton after he performed in Las Vegas...he reportedly paid her \$300.” Money, as a symbol of power, further complicated the relationship and drove the victims into self-blame. Coming forward against people in positions of power could be more humiliating because it insinuates that the accusers might be lying. In 2013, Datsik raped two women fans who didn’t give him consent, one of them explicitly telling him that “I don’t want to have sex” and the other being taken advantage of through drugs and alcohol. Both women did not speak out directly after the sexual abuse, confused by their relationship with the celebrity who used to be their role model. One woman reported that she “freaked out” after the event and attempted to “[push] back all these ashamed feelings.” The other woman described that she “blamed herself for being a stupid fangirl.” The victims accused themselves instead of coming forward against their perpetrator, which manifests the want of protection in the dance music scene and the society at large, if anything. It’s hard to know how many more victim’s stories have been buried by the tides of patriarchal cultures.

Yet, the “Me Too” movement has changed the tides and sparked progress in the scene. As an increasing number of women called out for justice via twitter in the filming industry, they not only raised public awareness about sexual harassment but also displayed their courage to survivors who saw themselves standing in solitude. Both women harassed by Datsik recalled that they had felt the need to speak up after seeing women around the world did just that. “[The guilty feelings] are resurfacing because of everyone coming forward,” the first woman wrote in her Tweets in 2018. Her comment was quickly followed by a post from the other woman: “All these stories have come out I know that I’m not the only one.” Indeed, victims of sexual assaults were no longer alone in their march towards justice; in the Age of Media they were backed up by virtual supporters, through which they gained their power and never again to be caged. The women who were bold enough to share their stories have planted the seeds of change, turning ripples into tidal waves.

4.2 Social Media as a Catalyst for Offline Activism

As a result of the allegations, male producers faced severe blows on their music business, which were altogether showcased to the public through social media. Following the accusations, Datsik was dropped from his management company Deckstar management, booking agency Circle Talent Agency, his own record label Firepower Records, and forced to cancel every future tour and festival performance. While Datsik had attempted to return to music in 2019, his failure to address the allegation in his apology infuriated EDM fans in the comment section. “Just watching datsik's non-apology, in which he spares not a single word to address his victims or acknowledge anyone but himself,” one person wrote, not without venom. Even though Datsik continued to release music on music streaming services, his reputation will likely cause him to be blacklisted by booking agents and other performance venues. Similarly, Bassnectar, Billy Kenny, Omar Afra, Space Jesus, STUCA, and Diplo were dropped by their respective labels, and their shows were canceled by major festivals. Even

though each artist has made attempts to counteract the allegations—Space Jesus sued against the allegations for “defamation, harassment, and stalking,” and STUCA derided the woman when she confronted him, “Ooh, what are you gonna do? Cancel me?,” their efforts were in vain as more people stood by the victims. Labels ceased to propagate their music on other occasions, and audiences, artists, and professionals openly criticized their work. When prominent producer and DJ Illenium (who ranked 43 in Top DJ MAG in 2020) played a popular song by Bassnectar, he was attacked by EDM fans on Twitter. Illenium later apologized for his behavior, claiming that he “honestly didn’t know it was a BN song,” and would “[delete] it from [his] library.” Social media platforms served as an effective sanction against perpetrators who got their voices heard through online distributions. Music from these dubstep figureheads was silenced for good, and to a music producer, what could be worse than having their streams limited, their music ordained to silence? Hopefully, the exposure of these sexual misconducts could prevent similar wrongdoings in the days to come, as any social vices will easily come under public scrutiny through media coverage.

Furthermore, it’s noteworthy that victims of non-consensual sexual assaults in EDM environments are almost always women. Many of them are underage girls. In fact, this phenomenon is in line with the findings of a 2020 research regarding sexual contact at EDM parties, published by the National Library of Medicine:

Almost all women experiencing non-consensual contact (99.5%) were all or mostly touched by men; 38.6% of men were all or mostly touched by other men. Women were at more than twice the odds of reporting non-consensual sexual contact than men (aOR = 2.38, $p < .05$) with 21.8% of women reporting experiencing non-consensual sexual contact compared to 11.0% of men. Among women, those ages 18-24 were at over twice the odds (aOR = 2.75, $p < .05$) of experiencing non-consensual sexual contact than those ages 25-40.

Characteristics of reported non-consensual sexual contact(s) and comparisons by participant gender (n = 212)				
	Combined Sample (n = 212), Weighted %	Women (n = 120; 21.8% of full sample), Weighted %	Men (n = 92; 11.0% of full sample), Weighted %	Comparison of Women and Men
Occurred Within the Past 12 Months				$\chi^2(1) = 0.36$
No (Last Occurred Over 12 Months Ago)	53.1	48.8	58.2	
Yes (Within the Past 12 Months)	46.9	51.2	41.8	
Frequency of Non- Consensual Sexual Contact(s) [†]				$\chi^2(3) = 1.79$
1-2 Times	62.5	54.2	72.7	
3-9 Times	27.0	35.1	17.1	
10-19 Times	3.8	4.9	2.3	
20+ Times	6.7	5.8	7.9	
Where Non-Consensual Sexual Contact(s) Occurred				$\chi^2(2) = 0.35$
Only at Festivals	9.6	11.7	7.1	
Only at Nightclubs	30.0	30.4	29.6	
At Both Festivals and	60.4	57.9	63.3	

Figure 3. Comparison of non-consensual sexual contacts by gender

Source: Non-Consensual Sexual Contact at Electronic Dance Music Parties, Joseph J. Palamar and Marybec Griffin

Either as an artist or a fan, women are subjected to sexual harassment at a higher rate than men. In response to the #Me Too movement, the EDM industry has launched multiple policies that aimed to protect victims of harassment. To wit: in 2020, the Association for Electronic Music (AFEM) launched a code of conduct that combats sexual assault and gender discrimination, later signed by more than 220 brands across the music industry including Amsterdam, Beatport, and Shogun Studio;

UK organization Musicians' Union (MU) called for the music industry to "hold zero tolerance against sexual abuse" in 2021; In 2022, the Face the Music Now foundation was established as the first organization in the music business to combat sexual harassment. It is hoped that these emerging policies, given birth by sexual violence and came into fruition through women's efforts, could be strengthened by male allies, their willingness to recognize gender differences and not turn it into privileges, and their participation in the conversations with women in #Me Too. It is only when men and women form alliances that powerful changes could be sent through the EDM sphere.

5. Conclusion

Since the beginning of EDM history, being a woman in EDM has added up to more risks and extra hard work. Harassment, double standards, expectations, and biased media have long been hindering women from fully engaging in this career. Fortunately, many DJs have recently began to acknowledge the gender obstacles, and various efforts were put in to create safe institutions and training places. Collectives, women-led record labels and venues, together with numerous support programs by organizations and companies all sought to establish a gender-equal environment that allow female to present their talents. Since 2017, the Me-Too movement has left its imprint in the EDM industry, allowing victims of sexual violence to share their experiences on media platforms and ensures a safe environment for professionals, artists, and audiences alike. Many women artists thrived under the progress of reaching gender equity; hopefully, these separate organizations will continue to rise on a global level and influence the music industry to be more inclusive as a whole.

As this research explains the possible reasons of lack of female producers and DJs in EDM field, it is hoped that the paper has reflected the actuality of gender inequalities in EDM and raised awareness among the readers; more importantly, by making conclusions and introducing successful strategies that female producers and DJs have developed to work against the gender disadvantages in EDM, it is further hoped that it could help existing male-dominant professions to adopt similar strategies and to foster a welcoming atmosphere for women, thereby diminishing gender imbalance in the long term.

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