

## **Sexism within the metal community – why is this still relevant in today's society?**

"Name five songs by the band on your t-shirt", is nearly something every single female metal fan will have heard said to them at some point throughout their lives. Now, this may seem like something you'd ask out of genuine curiosity, but what is it women dread so much about being asked this?

Sexism and misogyny have been deeply rooted within the music scene for a long time. It's evident that gender equality has progressed over time, allowing women to start being respected throughout the industry, but even though there has been growth, sexism and misogyny are still very real problems women face, especially within the metal community specifically.

Men have dominated the metal community from the get-go, sexism being able to be traced as far back as the genre's early days. With men leading this community at the time, women were being seen as outsiders and made to feel unwelcome in the community. This started out as a small problem but over the years the culture of misogyny started to grow bigger, gender discrimination becoming a huge part of the community. As misogyny started to develop into a bigger problem, so did the expectations of what a woman needed to do to become a fan. Things like being able to attend a concert or just simply enjoy a band's music has been ruined for women over the years. They are not able to attend concerts without being objectified or sexualised, making them feel uncomfortable in a place where they should feel safe. This can cause fans to stop going to shows, which will eventually start to have an effect on other musicians in the long run. Standard requirement has also been developed by metal elitists more recently, women needing to know every single facet of a musician/bands life to be validated within the community.

"I can't understand why women are made to feel uncomfortable in a community they should be made to feel welcome in", states Myah, a lifelong fan of heavy metal. The metal community has prided itself on its inclusiveness towards those of any gender, race or sexuality over the decades, but unfortunately doesn't display this, "I remember as a child, all I wanted was to be a part of the metal community, I wanted to belong somewhere, but I soon found out it wasn't all that it made out to be.". It seems that many others have shared the same experiences as Myah.

It's not only fans who struggle with sexism and misogyny, but musicians too. Female musicians often face discrimination throughout the metal industry, not being offered as many opportunities for gigs compared to men. They are also unfortunately subjected to misogynistic comments from industry professionals and even their own fans, which is incredibly discouraging. Things like this really make it a struggle for women to be able to gain recognition for their talent in the community due to a lack of representation. In the long term, this will start to have an effect on the younger generations, making them feel less seen and as though they are unable to relate to someone within this scene.

Despite these problems still being very real, the #MeToo movement has highlighted the issues we are facing of gender discrimination in the metal industry, finally allowing this to be addressed by the community. "I really hope this is something the metal community is able to make a comeback from", Myah states. "The #MeToo movement has made women feel so empowered and feel as though they are finally being heard. Not only has it given Myah the courage to speak out about her thoughts and problems with the metal community, but it has also given musicians, music promoters and fans the courage to speak out about their experiences of sexism within the community, starting to make real progress with the problems at hand. To be able to resolve these issues within the community there are many steps that need to be taken. One of the most significant solutions to this is the representation of female musicians being increased largely throughout the metal community. This can easily be achieved by woman being given the opportunity to be showcased at festivals, being given the chance to play gigs and to be represented throughout the media in magazines and on social media platforms. This can also be achieved starting to educate the metal community on sexism and how it has affected people's lives through classes and workshops.

"I really hope this is something the metal community is able to make a comeback from. I'm hopeful that there is going to be even more of a positive change. I've already seen an increase of women within the community, especially on social media. I think TikTok is going to be able to give the representation we all want to see."

It seems to be a hopeful future for the metal community as there is progress that continues to be made. Slowly but surely female musicians are starting to be seen represented across all types of media and are starting to be seen on stages and at festivals a lot more often. While there are drastic measures being taken to change the ways of the metal community for the better, will sexism ever not be a part of the metal community? We can hope that over the years things will only improve and that women start to feel comfortable in a community that is about the love and pure passion.