

THE BIG STORY

# The great divide: Music industry urged to act on female 'talent drain'

As the biz gets to grips with its gender pay problem, female execs react to figures showing a stark disparity – and come up with solutions

BY ANDRE PAINE

**W**omen in the music industry have reacted to the “terrible” gender pay gap figures and warned of the drain of experienced female executive talent.

While the major labels made some progress compared to the previous year, the 2018 figures still show a stark disparity in the average salaries paid to men and women.

“I’m very disappointed by the results,” said Sammy Andrews, CEO of Deviate Digital. “Some of our large music companies should be hanging their heads in shame.”

Based on the mean hourly measure, Warner Music UK had the widest pay gap at 38.7%, though that result improved by more than 10 percentage points. The major’s median pay gap – the figure showing how salaries compare at the mid-point of pay hierarchies – widened to 23.1%.

In the major’s gender pay report, Max Lousada, Warner Music Group CEO, recorded music and CEO/chairman, Warner Music UK, pledged to build a “modern music company that’s as equal and diverse as possible”.

“I was delighted to see Max say what he did because it’s people that are at the top of their organisations that have the power to actually create these changes,” said diversity consultant Claire Singers. “It sends a very strong signal.”

Sony Music had a median pay gap of 1.3% and a mean pay gap of 20.9%. The major said female representation in senior roles increased from 36.7% to 39.8%.

Universal Music’s mean gender pay gap was 29.1%, while the median figured widened from 16.7% to 20.9%. The company said the move in the wrong direction resulted from more women being recruited at junior levels.

“If you want to make a real difference, it does take several years because it’s a complex problem,” said Keith Harris, chairman of UK Music’s Diversity Taskforce.

Labels are implementing measures to help the recruitment, retention and promotion of female staff, including flexible working, career development and coaching and exploring the impact of unconscious bias.

The gender pay results underline the findings of the recent UK Music Diversity Report. While the industry is 49.1% female, women over 35 have lower representation.

“The problem seems to be that women are dropping out of the workforce before they get to the senior level,” said Harris. “That’s what we really need to look at, why aren’t women getting promoted to the levels that men are getting promoted to?”

“The major labels’ pay gaps are terrible really,” said recording engineer and MPG executive board member Olga Fitzroy, who also

campaigns for parental pay equality.

“The biggest problem is the motherhood penalty. It’s about supporting women after they have children and part of that is offering equal enhanced packages for shared parental leave. The labels can definitely improve on that.”

Vick Bain, former BASCA CEO and board member of Parents and Carers In Performing Arts (PiPA), called on the music business to be “proactive”.

“It’s such a talent drain and it’s costing the music industry a fortune,” she told *Music Week*. “We have lots of programmes to get women into the industry, and we then abandon them as soon as they have kids. That’s just incredibly shortsighted and that in turn feeds into what we’re seeing in the pay gap.”

Bain welcomed the appointment last month of Nina Bhagwat at Warner Music UK as head of inclusion and diversity.

“If we had more diversity specialists employed in these companies that would be great, because they could look at not just recruitment practices but especially retention,” she said.

Singers called for more transparency to provide a fuller picture.

“I would like to see some really rigorous data collection and measurement and targets being set,” she told *Music Week*. “What I find so perplexing is that this industry is so data-obsessed, and yet in the area of diversity and inclusion there seems to be a reluctance to set targets.”

Companies with more than 250 staff are legally required to report their gender pay gap figures. But there are wider concerns about the pay gap across the music sector.

“Let’s not limit this to the labels – just look at our collection societies, festivals, distributors, promoters, venues, publishers, studios, conferences,” said Andrews. “They all need to address many issues surrounding equality.”

She added: “One of the big problems here is there are yet to be many – in most cases any – women at the top. That’s not a problem specific to major labels; take a look at any big independent record label and you will struggle to find any women on those boards.”

While the figures made depressing reading, PPL was one organisation leading the way with a median pay gap of 2% in favour of women.

“Flexible working is an important part of allowing people to be able to come back and manage a family and their career as well,” said CEO Peter Leatham.

“We work very hard on our engagement approach to make sure we create the right culture,” added Kate Reilly, director of people and organisational development.

“I’m going to be optimistic because I think there are some very senior people in our industry really on board with this now because they realise their business depends on actually being more diverse,” said Singers.

“I am interested in what happens next year because that’s when I would expect to see some significant changes.”

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