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## Women in EDM: Are the Times Changing?

July 2, 2012 10:23 am

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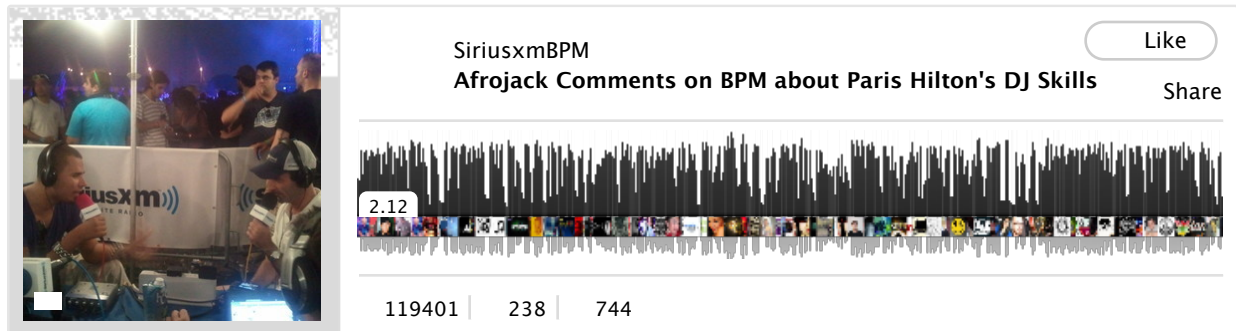
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**Editor's Note:** Thank you for all the interest on this article via **Facebook** and **Twitter**—we appreciate your support! We would have loved to include all of the incredible artists you mentioned in your tweets, but this article was more about the theme of women in the EDM scene rather than specific musicians—the artists we included were simply to illustrate a point rather than single out individual people for their contributions to dance music.

This recent business with **Paris Hilton** has created waves of uproar in the EDM community. Historically, the spoiled heiress has gotten everything she's wanted—television shows, fashion lines, fame itself—and then lost it. Far from lurking on the outskirts of infamy for long, though, **Paris** decided to delve into another unexplored and quickly rising scene, announcing her intent to become a DJ and even dating Dutch house superstar **Afrojack**. After a few embarrassing photos and videos of her spinning at various parties—often with a more experienced mixer running behind the scenes to save her image—emerged, the media backlash was intense: facing

criticism from producers, production companies and other prevalent faces in EDM media, **Paris** lost her boyfriend and her DJ career in one fell swoop. It's got me thinking: what is the role of women in the EDM world? Surely not everyone is a blonde bimbo a la **Paris**—but are female musicians' talents recognized as readily and heavily as men's?



Women have always been in the minority in the EDM world. While a few big names have managed to break that “glass ceiling” and carve their own paths, by and large, women have remained sideshows rather than centerpieces within EDM culture. More frequently appearing as gogo dancers or vocalists than producers or DJs, women are frequently seen as symbols of beauty rather than formidable talents in their own right. This is partially due to the sexist, patriarchal society that EDM emerged out of: in most developed countries in the world, women still don't have the privilege of *de facto* equal treatment with men—remnants of female oppression in law continue to be prevalent throughout Europe and North America, hampering their dreams of being regarded in the same league as men. This translates directly into EDM: at raves, many men show up in modest attire—t-shirts and jeans are common—but women wear skimpy bras and revealing underwear to shows, bedazzled with sparkles, feathers and other accoutrements and eager to show off their sex appeal. Yes, this is a personal choice—I see plenty of women at raves in drab attire—but just think: how did this end up becoming the standard attire of women in EDM? My guess is it's not entirely feminist empowerment.

When it comes to women actually producing in the EDM world, women are marginalized as well. It may well be the case that many women simply aren't interested in making music themselves, but to me that seems unlikely. My most educated guess assumes that women just aren't afforded the same opportunities as men—though this may not be obvious at first, it's a more subtle and insidious form of oppression. Most frequently, women are found as vocalists and supporting artists in EDM tracks, rather than as actual producers. The sentiment is that a woman shouldn't be the mastermind behind the genius of the track, but instead should just be the figurehead—the fantasy—through which sex appeal can be channeled for a primarily male audience.

Of course, there are notable exceptions to this rule. As with any scene, there are numerous powerful women who have worked hard to make names for themselves and create an empire of their own. Perhaps the name that most readily comes to mind is **Nadia Ali**—a beautiful,

hardworking artist who's been in the scene for decades, **Nadia** has consistently forged ahead, producing tracks and performing live since her work with her own band **iiO**. Another notable female producer is famous **As the Rush Comes** vocalist **JES**—while her two solo albums are relatively unknown except to diehard fans and her side projects make it difficult to distinguish her as an artist, **JES** has one of the most unique and interesting live shows I've seen: she actually mixes and sings at the same time, a feat which is certainly not easy to conduct, given the extreme amount of attention that each of those contrasting sets of skills requires. Another mainstay in the trance world is **Justine Suissa**, the vocal head of **Above & Beyond**'s chill trance project **OceanLab**—but long before that, she appeared on tracks by legends like **Armin van Buuren** and **Chicane** as far back as 2000.

Female producers are quite hard to come by, though they certainly exist. **Kristina Sky** spun a headlining set at **Electric Daisy Carnival** in Las Vegas a few weeks ago, putting together an uplifting and beautiful trance set that was one of the highlights of the **A State of Trance** tent during the entire festival. Australian sisters **NERVO** have managed to make a quite impressive name for themselves, producing outstanding tracks and remixes with a punky style and attitude that's entirely their own—**We're All No One** manages to sound like no one I've heard, and **You're Gonna Love Again** is frequently confused with Swedish pop-house legend **Avicii**, simply on the strength of its entrancing production alone. In my mind, **NERVO** is the perfect inspirational figure for women looking to emerge in the EDM world: managing to appear sophisticated and edgy without being pandering, these lovely ladies have distinguished themselves from the crowd without alienation. Perfect to demonstrate this is **NERVO**'s brand new music video for **You're Gonna Love Again**: challenging traditional female beauty norms, the sisters appear here as strong, confident women, alongside various people of diverse background gathered together to share the love of EDM—and that's really what it's all about.

As a whole, I see women advancing much further in the EDM world than they did in the past—more opportunities are afforded to them, and with the increasing diversity of sounds, shows and musical styles, it’s easier than ever for women to forge ahead and create unique personas. Additionally, the PLUR ethos itself has “respect” right in the statement—EDM tends to be a much more progressive movement than many musical trends of past decades. The scene isn’t perfect, though; shades of patriarchal society still seep into the cracks of EDM’s stronghold, implanting hegemonic ideals of oppression into the minds of millions around the world. As long as this remains the status quo, EDM won’t budge—and, sadly, that isn’t something we can affect on our own—but by opening our minds and hearts to the beauty and talent of individuals based on their own personal merits, we can hopefully break a barrier, burn a bridge, and dissolve the artificial walls between the sexes.

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**Kirsty Hawkshaw** • 3 months ago

Also the VSA is our rising star right now. For years Vocalists have been given disgraceful contracts, have been under a Dictatorship within the Dance world and are now connecting via the <http://www.vsa-global.com> website, soon to be .org. It's great to see so many women finally getting their chance to have a fair turn in the EDM scene. I've just finished an album with Ulrich Schnauss for release later this year.

Kirsty Hawkshaw

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**Melissa Mac** • 3 months ago

I think one of the most amazing things about our culture is that bullshit gets called out quickly. When a woman uses her sex appeal to get the gig, she doesn't last long.. I would say part of the issue is those type of "djs" that make it harder for real talent to be recognized. I don't believe there are actual music lovers that took Paris Hilton as a DJ seriously for a second. A huge part of the way women are treated in the industry is the fault of the women who decide to shortcut talent and floss sex appeal, even to the point of dropping top.

As a woman in the industry, behind the scenes, I can say.. It is extremely difficult to maintain relationships with anyone outside of the industry- and sometimes in it. It's possible that sometimes it goes deeper than whether or not promoters and fans are being fair to the sexes. I'm a single mother, I had my daughter young and had to leave the industry because I couldn't be a great mommy and travel all the time.. (personal choice, I'm sure some women can- based on economic status)

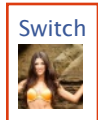
Women have to make choices that men really don't have to make. For example, do they want children.. if so, traveling around the world, not being stationary and cultivating a relationship- you can't have babies.. and you have to choose this by 38. Women deal with this choice everyday, in and out of the music industry.. Men don't have that type of pressure.

## Author

[Adam Starker](#)

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