

***UNREAL* MAGAZINE: A FEMINIST MAGAZINE DEDICATED TO
WOMEN IN MUSIC**

Honors Thesis

**Presented in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of Bachelor of Arts in English**

In the College of Arts and Sciences
at Salem State University

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2015

Unreal Magazine: A Feminist Magazine Dedicated to Women in Music

My project is *Unreal Magazine*, an online magazine dedicated to women in the music industry. The website can be found here: <http://unrealzine.wix.com/unreal>. The basis of this project was to create an online magazine geared towards the subject of women in music. In today's society, women are still seen and treated as second-class citizens. In particular, women are considered to be less talented and are typically taken less seriously than their male counterparts. Because of this, it is important to showcase female musicians in a strong, empowering light in order to show and fix the sexism and misconstrued ideals in today's society.

I had a variety of influences that led me to the final project idea. Music has had a tremendous influence on my life. Particularly, I have looked up to women in every facet of the music industry. Whether they are performers, producers, or merchandise representatives, women can do anything and everything in the music industry. However, society has these expectations and preconceived notions about women that they cannot do things as well as men. One of those things is perform and work in the music industry.

Because of these stereotypes, I have always looked up to women in the music industry who have shattered people's expectations. Hayley Williams from the pop punk band Paramore was one of the first women that showed me that women can hold their own in a male-dominated industry. Pop punk is genre where women are not prevalent but the emergence of Hayley Williams changed all that. Now the genre is seeing the emergence of more female singers, drummers and guitarists. With this project, I wanted to aid the process of representing women in the rock genre in a positive light so more and more women embrace the genre and transform it into some more inclusive.

Some of the other female music influences that my project has been inspired by come from several different genres. Bands such as Flyleaf, Automatic Loveletter, Florence and the Machine, and Gregory and the Hawk all belong to different genres of music but they are still successful groups in the music industry. Solo female artists have also shown that women can be successful by themselves by producing music that pertains to their musical influences. Beyoncé, Kate Nash and Lily Allen have influenced this project because their music ventures have proven that women can stand out and change music as well as the world.

Magazine writing has also had a tremendous impact on this project. As an English major with a concentration in Professional Writing, I took several classes where magazine writing was the main focus. I feel comfortable in that genre of writing and I believe it is a great way to easily and quickly showcase the works of writers. Also, working on *Red Skies*, the school's literary magazine and becoming a managing editor gave me the experience I needed to shape hard-hitting articles and design a layout that was easily navigable for users.

Music magazines in general also influenced *Unreal Magazine*. I have been reading *Alternative Press Magazine* for nearly a decade and love how they garner readers for the rock/punk/metal scenes. Since these genres rarely have female artists, I felt as though I should create a magazine that better exemplifies women in these genres and shows that they actually exist and contribute to the music scene. *Rolling Stone* also has influenced me when it comes to what to do and what not to do when creating a magazine. *Rolling Stone* goes in depth when it comes to interviews and album reviews which readers enjoy because writers can usually back up what they're saying with actual proof. I wanted my articles to have that authentic and thorough approach as well. However, I feel as though *Rolling Stone* forgets it is a music magazine sometimes and tends to stray away from musical topics even in articles about a band, musician,

or something else in the music industry. I wanted to avoid that excessive and aimless style when it came to this magazine.

I have also been influenced by the feminist movement with this project. Feminism in general is a very important influence in my life and I wanted to translate that to this magazine. Jessica Valenti's book *Full Frontal Feminism* impacted my perspective on many pop culture subjects including music. The equality of the sexes needs to be addressed in the music industry since sexism is apparent in almost every genre of music. With this magazine, I managed to highlight women in order to rebalance some of the influence the patriarchy has had on the music industry.

Overall, I am very proud of what I accomplished this senior honors thesis. If someone had told me at freshman orientation that I would create my own online magazine by the time I finished college, I would have laughed in their face. I wanted to achieve so much with this project and I believe that I have.

With this magazine, I wanted to create a platform for women, especially female musicians, to have a voice. It is important that society embraces women and the important work they contribute to every facet of life. Music is just one step in breaking down these outdated stereotypes. Women can rock as hard as men and are as equally talented. All women need is that spotlight, that push, that inspiration to go out and change the world.

Women are overshadowed especially in the music industry and I think something such as my magazine will shed a little light on the counterproductive situation in place. I hoped to accomplish a way to inspire women to pursue their musical passions and not be hindered by the patriarchy or societal expectations and I believe I achieved just that.

I learned a lot through this magazine. One of the greatest things I discovered is that there is in fact an audience for this type of magazine. I posted a link to my magazine on a website where I could track who looked at the page. The website got hundreds of hits within a month span which surprised me. I also saw that the people looking at the website were not just from the United States. People from France, Sweden and Canada were all viewing my website. I realized that equal rights and social equality are not just fights within the United States. The world also wants to change their patriarchal societies and music is a perfect way to express that need.

Because there is an audience for a magazine about female musicians, I realized that this is something I can contribute to even after I submit this project. I can continually update the website and promote it more on social media in order to garner more views and readers. It is exciting seeing what I went to school for come to fruition. I am motivated to continue this magazine and change the face of music one reader at a time.

If I had to change anything about the magazine, I would allot more time for me to be an editor. One person cannot run a magazine by themselves. I found it overwhelming at times focusing on layout design and writing and editing and formatting pictures all at once. If I had to do this project all over again, I would ask for volunteers to write articles for me. Whether it was on their perspective of a certain music scene or a concert review, having a constant flow of articles from contributors would resemble an actual magazine work environment. I could also showcase my editing skills as an actual editor-in-chief and focus more on maintain the website.

Overall, I am proud of what I have accomplished with this project and the honors program. This magazine took a lot of time, effort, research, and motivation to get it done but I fulfilled all that I wanted for it. I am excited to continue the magazine after graduation as a possible career path. Music is something almost everyone listens to and respects so there is an

audience. Inequality is not going away anytime soon so this magazine can definitely be a catalyst for change. *Unreal* Magazine will lend itself to many social causes and I hope it will change how society interprets both music and feminism and it sees them both as essential.